

THE KID LOSES TO DOMINATION: ENVIRONMENTALITY,  
MODERN DOMINATION AND SUBJECTHOOD IN  
KEN KESEY'S *SOMETIMES A GREAT NOTION*

by

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## ABSTRACT

“The Kid Loses to Domination” offers a multidisciplinary critique of environmentality, domination and subjecthood regarding Ken Kesey’s 1964 novel *Sometimes a Great Notion*. Utilizing methods drawn from the academic discipline of environmental criticism; natural and environmental history, philosophy, ecopsychology, ethology and critical theory offer perspective. This work emerged from a fall 2010 class titled “Ecocriticism,” taught by University of Utah Professor Robert Stephen Tatum. Kesey’s novel, largely neglected critically, offers enormous potential to the field of ecocritique. A realist story of a patriarchal logging family set in early- to mid-twentieth century Oregon, Kesey offers through mimesis a rich environmentality duly represented in form. Ecomimesis aside, the novel offers historically rooted grounds for capitalist critique and a strong template for critique of patriarchal domination and the so-called traditional western American masculine archetype.

Fiction differs admittedly from history or psychology. Storylines, causes and effects, influences and outcomes are often invented in fiction; while in history, a convincing story or argument emerges in tandem with verifiable fact. Research driven psychology utilizes theory, hypothesis testing and peer review to suggest tendencies or general characteristics in the human condition. Too readily useful perspectives are converted into gospel truth, bad science or history. Wallace Stegner—Kesey’s late 1950’s writing mentor—aimed for Western realism in fiction. Guiding the widely

recognized teacher, writer, historian, and ardent environmentalist was the belief that in fiction “we should have no agenda but to tell the truth.” Through the humanities, scholars too can bring to light certain ‘truths’ or perceptions, patterns denied recognition yet profoundly affecting awareness and our relationship to our selves, each other and the more than human world.

In the ecological view, a system is far more complex than its constituents; subverts with dynamic interrelations held more significant than static identities, and recognizes that feedback loops—as well as dominant and resistant elements—change system behavior. This seems true of critical disciplines as well. The whole is more than a sum of the parts, and what we learn today—whether from history, literature, science, critical thinking or the natural environment—cannot but influence individual and collective action tomorrow.

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INTRODUCTION: A (FICTIONAL) HISTORY OF  
DOMINATION IN THE STAMPER FAMILY  
AND WAKONDA, OREGON

*We are born to ourselves as subjects irreducible to what other people and society ask us to be and allow us to be.*<sup>1</sup>

—André Gorz, *Ecologica*

Ken Kesey's 1964 epic *Sometimes a Great Notion* tells a story of the construction and evolution of domination through a version of the traditional western American male stereotype. The tale also tells a story of particular time and place, 1961 southwestern Oregon, a story rooted in what Lawrence Buell might refer to as a rich, lustrous environmentality. Realism is grounded in a particular moment in the evolution of American capitalism, a moment regionally constructed in Oregon by the modern mechanization of the timber industry on the one hand, and the unionization of labor on the other. Twelve hundred year old trees typical of pre-settlement times, which once constituted enduring old growth forests, have largely succumbed to clear-cut harvest, leaving second growth forests and degraded soils in their place. Only close familiarity with the natural history of the region can show this is the case. Hence the wisdom of Buell's call to cultivate an awareness of representation—its similarities and distinctions—to historical and literal environments, through the use of natural histories in the interpretation and critique of literary works (29).

This collection of essays roughly unfolds according to consecutive theoretical waves of ecocritical consideration: history grounded in place followed by philosophy and finally scientific

and post-structural concerns. The first and last essays will address domination and the environment more generally, while the second, third and fourth essays address these issues in the context of what I call ‘the bobcat vignette.’ Outside of the ecocritical discipline, critical readers of these essays may ask what place natural and environmental history, let alone ecopsychology, ethology or nature writing have in a body of work centered on patterns of domination, a theme perhaps best left to analysis from the rubric of critical theory. Ecocritique, like much thinking in environmental humanities as well as the ecological thinking Timothy Morton describes in works such as *The Ecological Thought*, mandates a multi-disciplinary approach drawing together diverse perspectives for a better informed, more pluralistic view than specialized disciplines can afford on their own. Multidisciplinary perspectives and writing open up interpretive work in surprising, accurate and imaginative ways. As in the sciences, multidisciplinary insights into literature shed light on corners previously neglected from lack of perspective—as well as a lack of sufficient tools for perception.

From very early on, the just reader will probably respond with moral outrage to the heavy-handed sexist, racist and anti-Semitic passages in the novel. Women are for the most part characterized by clichés characteristic of a male society rooted in the traditional Western American male stereotype, weak objects good only for sex, service to males and denigration. Resistance to this misogynistic, one dimensional portrait occurs typically only through sexual encounter or masculinization. Even in such a misleading, traditional masculine-constructed portrait of women, aspects of feminism show through. Similarly, blacks are offered virtually no respect or empowerment in the novel. Kesey’s imagined society could easily pass for a southern, Klan-loving bunch of racists. In the final essay I will explore in detail the use of the word “nigger” in the novel, its odd combination of familiarity and hierarchizing, its inevitable allusion

to white supremacy. Like anti-socialist sentiments patriarch Henry Stamper expresses in the novel, anti-Semitic expressions may best be seen as historical American attitudes held by some and, like sexism and racism, insidiously all too familiar to this day. If there is one significant concern for resurrecting this novel despite its offenses, it may lie in Kesey's unbelievable ability to characterize domination on psychological, interpersonal and social levels, leaving behind a useful artifact modeling domination and its patterns on multiple levels. Kesey kills off traditional faith in domination by the novel's end, kills off Hank's confidence in the social apparatus of domination instilled by his father and interpellated by society, even as it is reproduced.

Merely telling the story of Stamper dominance situated in the dominance-based, fictitious society of Wakonda would do grave injustice to real world impacts of domination on women, children, otherized ethnicities and peoples, the more than human world—and those inheriting the mantle of domination. Social philosopher André Gorz characterizes the dominant consciousness, what could in *Sometimes* be called the consciousness of domination, as the social megamachine, the hegemony to which humans in a dominance-based world are subjected. Rather than splitting off a ruling class, Gorz splits off the consciousness: “the dominant social strata suffer its domination, as much as do the dominated. The dominant dominate only insofar as they serve it as loyal functionaries” (4).<sup>2</sup> The ecological crisis we are weathering and will weather for some time to come has been brought on by—we should well know by now—the perfect storm of three salient factors. First and most obvious, the rise and continued propagation of high capitalism and consumer addiction thriving on resource extraction and the manufacture of desires, needs and consumers. Second, the global population boom, which closely parallels industrialization and the emergence of modern fossil fuels. Finally, capitalism could not have had widespread success without domination disciplining—or enslaving—labor for its work. The manufacture of new and

mass available desires required more than the abandonment of subsistence living and specialization of domestic and professional labor. Even pre-capitalist creation of surplus, beginning with agriculture, required—as archaeologist David Stuart discusses in *Anasazi America*—the control and hierarchy of labor. That necessity rises hand in hand with new cosmologies that in part maximized production through duty and belief. God’s word forms the dominating consciousness of Hank’s grandfather Jonas, Henry’s stern but unbalanced father in the novel. Given the work Jonas and his sons have cut out for them on the Oregon frontier—constructing Jonas’ civilized Eastern vision of home and business—a strong morality disciplining labor would be a necessity.

Domination roots the historic global colonizing process every bit as much as it is rooted in the control and degradation of women and the environment. Colonization symbols in the novel—the remote and faceless West Coast extractive corporation Wakonda Pacific; local union coordinator Floyd Evenwrite’s office visit yielding only talk with a clerk; the mention of historic Hudson’s Bay Company—are perhaps better understood from critical histories regarding colonization and its experience by colonized peoples. Faceless distance, hierarchic foreign rule, an implication of contempt for the local workers who provide labor to extract native resources tend to be all too common. Following Val Plumwood’s thesis in her enormously influential *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*, an ecocritical reading centered on the logics, rhetorics and actions of domination in Kesey’s *Sometimes* offers practical awareness and concrete understanding of one central issue underlying social and environmental injustice to this day: domination.<sup>3</sup> Underlying the following essays is my own central thesis. Namely, I argue that the central, apparently dominating figure in Kesey’s *Sometimes*—Hank Stamper: son of Henry Stamper, half brother to Leland Stamper and recognized head of the Stamper timber operation—

evolves and mitigates the ways of domination interpellated by his dad and male society in the town of Wakonda. Evolution away from a strict reproduction of socialized male domination I argue occurs primarily from Hank's immersion in the more than human world, his attachment to and grief over the loss of the bobcat kittens in the bobcat vignette.

Centered in the early 1960's, *Sometimes a Great Notion* begins near the end and comes full circle to tell the story of a rift between independent and union loggers, the fiercely independent Stamper logging family and the townfolk of Wakonda. More central to Kesey's intent, the history and relationships of especially the men of the family. Patriarch Henry Stamper, an old man by the early 60's, father to Hank and Lee Stamper, built an independent, family run logging operation from bitter beginnings as a child whose father Jonas ran out and left him to fend for his family's reputation—and meager holdings—against the town's dominant capitalist and collective shaming. Resentment underlies stubborn independence in the novel, while questions of collective union versus independent labor in the service of capitalism are for the most part buried in personal issues and contests of superiority. Hank and Lee are perhaps the two central characters in the novel, and their childhood leaves unfinished business for Lee that drives Lee's quest to destroy Hank and become recognized as a man in the family through an act of rivalry and domination. Myra, Lee's mother, has an affair with teenage Hank that leaves Lee neglected, hurt and resentful, driving his quest for revenge. Hank marries Vivian, and Vivian becomes Lee's dark conquest in bringing down Hank. Joe Ben, Hank's cousin, provides comic relief as well as a faithful friend to Hank, only to be lost in the tragic logging accident at the end of the novel that fatally wounds old Henry and seemingly brings down the house of Stamper. Just when the townsfolk and union leaders Floyd Evenwrite and Jonathan Draeger think they have won, the emblem of Henry's disembodied arm hung over the river for all to see, all fingers

broken off save for one, points to the final scene where Lee joins Hank in fulfilling a logging contract against all odds, feeling he has finally become an equal and a man. Vivian leaves town and her two loves behind to find herself, and Hank and Lee take their coveted capital of logs downriver to the big lumber outfit Wakonda Pacific. That in a nutshell describes the characters and bold plotlines I shall draw from in the essays that follow. But no synopsis can duplicate Kesey's Faulknerian family and plot lines, his enjambed multiple narrative style or cinematic qualities, or his voluminous, lush, overgrown naturalistic depiction at all turns of the natural environment. In form as well as content, Kesey's *Sometimes* exceeds all expectations as a work depicting the nexus of historical time, place, environment, capitalist underpinnings and truly moving characters. His realistic depiction of masculine domination makes the novel truly an unmined jewel of American literature in articulating critical theory on domination.

Four key terms deserve preliminary exploration before entering into use in these essays: domination, especially modern domination; the traditional western American male archetype and stereotype; environmentality; and interpellation. In her work on the chimpanzees of Gombe—a close cousin to humans—Jane Goodall discusses pertinent theories and observations of domination. Central to her characterization is a hierarchical social structure established through aggressive confrontation and held in place by implied (or re-expressed) threat and acceptance of one's place (Goodall, *Chimpanzees*, 410). Gestures and expressions confirm both the pecking order, which is never static, and the affiliation of dominant to subordinate. Goodall—following many others theorizing on the benefits of domination in chimpanzees, humans and other species—notes the correlation of dominant status with overall lowered aggression in the group. Violence and the threat of violence secure and maintain the pecking order, though once established, “the need for overt aggression fades” and “the dominance relationship...can remain

intact through habit, though weakness would allow its overturn” (Goodall, *Chimpanzees*, 410). In the pages that follow, excerpts of dialogue and narrative from the pages of *Sometimes a Great Notion* often suggest both a hierarchical structure and the maintenance of that structure through habit, threat and overturn. While *The Kid Loses to Domination* merely gestures towards the psycho-social concept of behavioral conditioning, the apparent similarities to Goodall’s concept of habituation calls for broader and deeper exploration of similarities and difference. Of especial note for the following essays is the idea that “Benefits conferred by movement up the hierarchy are offset by efforts necessary to maintain position” (Goodall, *Chimpanzees*, 442). I tend to read these observations—filtered through theoretical literature and language—more in terms of their resonance than a direct one to one relationship, an “if the shoe fits” way of looking rather than pointing to research-based proof for humans and parallels. Goodall notes that low ranked and crippled males pass on their genes “even if—or perhaps because—they opt out of the adult male power struggle” (*Chimpanzees*, 478). She characterizes movement up the hierarchy as an enormous energy expenditure often fraught with high risk.

Frank K. Salter, in *Emotions in Command*, draws on a large body of ethnological, sociological and psychological research, theory and literature to construct a complex modern perspective on human domination, especially as it functions normatively to manage bureaucracy. Salter sums up researcher Stanley Milgram’s starting point this way: “Through the ages, hierarchy has increased group members’ ability to cope with environmental threats and has reduced conflict between them. A basic feature of dominance hierarchies is that they are mediated by symbols of authority rather than by contests of physical strength” (15). Perhaps even more wincing is the notion that “progress toward civilization has only been possible through” in Milgram’s words “direct, concerted action” (Salter, 16). Salter utilizes Milgram’s

model, termed the four ‘antecedent conditions of obedience,’ to elaborate. First, socialization hinges on “the individual’s innate propensity to form dominance relations” (Salter, 16). Family, school and work organization “establish in modern societies a habit of subordination to legitimate authority” (Salter, 16). Appearance of the symbol of authority, rather than physical assertion or possession, defines the exercise of power. Second, entry into the authority system is rooted in the manufacture of feeling that elicits deference. Voluntarism utilizes obligation and commitment to evoke obedience, while coercion relies more heavily on surveillance and threat of sanctions. But can voluntarism truly have escaped Michel Foucault’s panoptic image of self served surveillance and subsequent threat of sanction—or anticipated rewards? Third, authority figures are aligned with the rules and expectations of the organization. According to Milgram: “authorities come under strain when a subordinate knows more than his superior” (Salter, 17). The challenge of domination by son, the besting of the father in *Sometimes a Great Notion* hinges on this notion as well. Salter goes on to say that diplomacy preserves hierarchical power relations while communicating augmentative feedback. Fourth in Milgram’s theory, ideology holds embedded notions of institutional and organizational structure, process and function. Salter draws upon Milgram for a detailed example of the constitution of infrastructure theory, noting that a dominance infrastructure aggregates “social techniques which resequence, redirect, constrain, magnify, and substitute for dominance behaviors in pursuit of organizational goals” (17). Salter characterizes affiliation relationships as well, which may underlie the notion of partnership in Riane Eisler’s work, but for the purposes of focus and brevity I’ll leave a discussion of these alternative relations out. An ecological reading of domination, however, would of necessity have to incorporate scientific theoretical notions, however pluralist the argument or the term’s construction may become in these essays.



Richard J. Lowry, writing on humanistic psychologist Abraham Maslow, noted that Maslow's early, groundbreaking laboratory studies on dominance in monkeys led to the significant find that dominance was usually established by visual contact without the need to fight (Maslow, v, 1). Through experimental observations of humans, Maslow determined that in pairs, one human typically dominated, while the subordinate afforded more respect than the dominant (50). Especially noteworthy in constructing the dominance relationship for Maslow was the 'child-parent attitude,' while the dominant's feeling array included superiority, greater self- than other-respect, condescension, pity and aloofness. These patterns are especially apparent in the patriarchal Henry of the novel, though the struggling dominant Floyd Evenwrite tries in vain to master these same kinds of expressions as well. Out of a particular moment in American culture and psycho-social history, Maslow constructs his influential theory of self esteem, linking self esteem to what he terms 'dominance feeling: "being able to handle other people," "masterfulness and mastery" and the notion that "others do and ought to admire and respect one" (52). Tellingly, Maslow claimed he and his fellow researchers chose the term 'dominance' in part to assert continuity between primates, human children and adults (52f).

In a different vein, Pierre Bourdieu, distinguished sociologist and philosopher, emphasizes the symbolic nature of modern domination, noting "men are also prisoners, and insidiously victims, of the dominant representation...Being a man...implies an ought to be" (49). For Bourdieu, the ideology of domination directs male thought and practice: "he cannot do otherwise, lest he deny himself" (50). The notion of a morally constructed male—of for instance the old spitfire Henry and his less archetypally driven son Hank in *Sometimes*—suggest hellfire and brimstone underpinnings historically modified by the capitalist need for logging labor and the evolution of consumer culture in the Pacific Northwest of the late 1950's and early 1960's.

Finally, Val Plumwood describes the master model as “a white, largely male elite” built on hidden assumptions because the model is “taken for granted as simply a human model” (23). This is also “the dominant western model of humanity into which women will be fitted...a model of domination and transcendence of nature, in which freedom and virtue are construed in terms of control over, and distance from, the sphere of nature, necessity and the feminine” (23).

Clearly, modern domination has grown—ever more complex, insinuating, pervasive, invisible and insidious—out of primitive structures of power relations. Hank’s love of and compulsion to fistfighting in the novel mirrors in a dramatic way Jane Goodall’s notions of aggression, domination and hierarchy. Few who have been dominated, enslaved or colonized would agree with theoretical arguments from scientists asserting the necessity or innateness of domination, but domination has been so deeply modeled, embedded and adhered to in the structuring of human relationships in so much of the world that coming up with a theory based on default rather than natural selection would seem dubious at best. Yet control and stress management seem to go hand in hand with domination and reversion to more primitive ways of getting what we want and preventing what we don’t want. I disagree with the scientific notion that domination is a necessity of the species, and view the costs—to the environment as well as women, children, the subordinated otherized, and those trapped in the dominant archetype—as currently far outweighing the benefits of our day and age. I have utilized transactional analysis to get at the almost invisible structures, rhetorics and logics of domination that Kesey wrote into the thoughts, dialogue and portrayal of his characters and their relations in *Sometimes*. In addition to the largely symbolic nature of modern domination and its ability as Foucault introduces in *Discipline and Punish* to move the exercise of power out of physical hands and into the hearts and minds of the subjected—indoctrinated on a level far below consciousness, moving like a

Marxist superstructure of capitalist domination—I center the domination of capitalist ideology in the unevolved, uber-consumerist, modern growth and economy obsessed state. While early forms of domination may have been driven and controlled by religious symbology and power structures, modern domination in my mind is distinct in its construction, symbolic exercise of power over worker as well as consumer, and especially in its detrimental outcomes: for true human freedom and evolution, for biodiversity and ecosystem health, and for the proper valuing of ecology and the human place within it. As scientific theory is derived from accumulated hypothesis and research, critical theory must reach out into the awareness of and affect change on every expression, thought and gesture that circumscribes domination on the relations of humans to each other and the more than human world.

The choice of the term ‘traditional western American male,’ appended with ‘stereotype’ or ‘archetype,’ points perhaps rather poorly to a collection of characteristics the reader may most readily recognize in the image and description of the cowboy hero: courage, stoicism, “initiative against the forces of nature and collectivism,” as Barry H. Leeds describes the cowboy hero of *Sometimes* (63); strength, self reliance and “the mold of the cowboy hero...in [American] western myths” (Tanner, 65); heroism, bravery and independence (Porter, 37). Bernard DeVoto, lampooning satirical caricatures of American westerners, referred to the cowboy symbol as “one of the few Romantic symbols in American life” (47). In addressing the settlement of the final frontier, the interior American west, DeVoto pointed to the need for the industrial revolution: railroads, barbed wire, repeating rifles and pistols. Particularly, capital that made for wealthy Easterners while leaving gold-washers along with much of the American west exploited. DeVoto characterizes pioneers dependent on industrial infrastructure as “a debtor class” (53). He refers to the Westerner as “Looted, betrayed, sold out...the romantic clothes are only occupational

garments, a work suit, the sign of the Westerner's adaptation to the conditions of one of his trades" (DeVoto, 65). DeVoto refers to the cowboy, but the lumberjack, the miner, even the farmer—subject to multinational corporation buyout, market vicissitudes and competition—similarly fits the bill. In my view, the traditional western American male stereotype, however over-generalized, tends like the cowboy hero to be idealized on the one hand and manipulated for hegemonic purposes on the other. Tough, industrious, oblivious to pain; heartless, deaf and blind to environmental destruction—as well as ecological relations requiring feeling, sensitivity and intuition—have been a stereotypical hallmark critiqued by feminism and ecofeminism for its domination and rationalism in oppression of women, minorities and the more than human world.

Henry Stamper, the central patriarch of *Sometimes a Great Notion* is, in his heyday and his rhetoric the embodiment of this brand of male, worker and independent leader. What tends to remain hidden from view is the co-opting of a protestant work ethic to serve capitalist purposes, the need for a certain kind of regimented and standardized male able to work like a cog—and think like a loyalist and propagandist—in the capitalist machine. Working on a micro-level, Beverly J. Stoeltje in "Paredes and the Hero: The North American Cowboy Revisited" addresses the rise of the professional rodeo. Building on Américo Paredes' notion that the North American cowboy hero answered the call for a strong national identity, Stoeltje draws on Paredes' "analysis of symbolic forms for political purposes," alert to power relations, recognizing "the creation of a heroic figure by external forces to serve hegemonic purposes" (45). Anyone familiar with North American domestic truck commercials are likely to have experienced the hegemonic reverence of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century cowboy hero, idealized blue collar worker concealing manipulation of identity to buy a new mechanized horse on credit, along with boats, all terrain vehicles (ATV's) and other accoutrements of the 'successful,' idealized, modern blue

collar lifestyle in the American west. My take on the traditional western American male stereotype is as a construct with deep resonance in the western American male psyche manipulated for consumerist—and means of production—enterprises. To fell old growth forests, one has to have a work ethic as well as an ecological morality prioritizing capitalist interests—‘needed’ consumer goods and raw materials—while concealing accrual of capital, attainment of wealth in centralized corporations, executive salaries and market speculators.

Hubert Cohen, writing on a lesser known cowboy motif of film, roots the dominant take in a virtually “absolute and value laden” distinction between masculine and feminine (57). Articulating the dominant view, Cohen utilizes terms for the masculine such as “activity, mobility, adventure...emotional restraint,” while for the feminine “passivity, softness, romance, and domestic containment” stereotype (57). Feminists have surely tired of these oppressive, ill fitting and dominant culture-serving designations. The ubiquitous “Western hero as taciturn, macho and generally aloof” reinforces notions of the traditional western American male archetype as it has been constructed for story, television and film even as Cohen draws on Jane Tompkins to elaborate with such terms as “suppression of the inner life,” the stamping out of male “interior consciousness,” linking silence and emotional control with a “manhood and trueheartedness that forbids acknowledgement of pain” (57). In Tompkin’s words, ‘the Western’ teaches “not to cry out or show that we care. For to show that your heart is not hard, to cry when you feel pain, your own or someone else’s, is...soft, womanish, emotional, the very qualities the Western hero must get rid of to be a man” (Cohen, 57). What is missing from the deconstruction of the masculine hero in western American culture is the recognition that heroism and cog-like mechanistic efficiency; self sacrifice and the rewards of honor and integrity to the cause; were long ago hijacked by capitalism and its hegemony and turned—at great cost to the flowering of

individual male consciousness, at great cost to all the oppressed humans and species of the more than human world—to the service of capitalism and the removal of obstructions standing between it and its rationalized goals.

Stereotypes are probably far more transparent than archetypes. Stereotypes appear as reified typologies, labels used to gloss over characteristics that individualize a being under a dominant perception of behavior and identity. Carl Jung offers an etymology of ‘archetype’ to suggest the alliance with “archaic” or “primordial” types of the collective unconscious. He sees virtually no difference with Lévy-Bruhl’s term “representations collectives” (5), save for the definition of archetype as expressly unconscious and untemplated phenomena. “The archetype is essentially an unconscious content that is altered by becoming conscious and by being perceived, and it takes its colour [sic] from the individual consciousness in which it happens to appear” (Jung, 5). Jung refers to the “dogmatic symbol” as “a tremendous and dangerously decisive psychic experience” (11), where dogma replaces the collective unconscious with ideological constructs (12). In art, literature and film, archetypes such as the hero, mother, father or villain tend to have deep and easily recognizable patterns, due to the longevity of the type and its reliance on basic, quasi-universal characteristics. Jung, having cursorily studied several cultures, believed that “Archetypes are complexes of experience that come upon us like fate, and their effects are felt in our most personal life” (38). Lacking the benefit of research and theory on observational and behavioral conditioning, Jung speculated on the possessiveness of archetypes utilizing a very unscientific language:

The characteristic feature of a pathological reaction...is above all identification with the archetype. This produces a sort of inflation and possession by the emergent contents, so that they pour out in a torrent which no therapy can stop...you experience your identity with the archetype in an unconscious way and so are possessed by it (351, 352).

Robin Robertson simplifies Jung's exploratory notions of archetype to the example of for instance a mother: "all animals beyond a certain level of complexity appear to have an archetype for Mother. They instinctually know a great deal about what to expect from a Mother" (102).

Drawing on the work of ethologist Konrad Lorenz, Robertson suggests the archetype stretches by way of experience to assume various forms. Perhaps primitive man carried a club, while the archetypal Westerner carried a gun and rode a horse, and the modern Westerner drives a pickup, enjoys hunting and watching full contact sports. These aren't hard, fast identities, but common identity tropes that modern psychology might suggest have been passed down through behavioral and operant conditioning, social learning and normalized social expectations. Successful, attractive models beget emulators that identify with a collective of characteristics typical of a culture: the archetypal father, mother or in my usage the traditional western American male archetype. Clearly not all men are possessed by it, but those who are may be enchanted by its power and decisiveness or ready-made being and fitting in, while its manipulability by authority figures, bosses, corporations, governments and the like for constructing useful, efficient identities for labor and production has perhaps gone largely unnoticed. Because the traditional western American male archetype has overwhelmingly determined women's traditional archetypal and stereotypical roles and identities, a feminist view of archetypes is in order.

Estella Lauter and Carol Schreier Rupprecht critically appraise from a feminist perspective the absolutism of Jung's followers: "Instead of being explanations of reality experienced by females, archetypes of the feminine had become categories to contain women" (7). Following from Jungian theorist James Hillman: "all 'rich' images, that is, fecund, generative images that merit our repeated attention, are archetypal. We make them archetypal as we extend and value them in our image making work" (10). I would extend this notion to self

image—our notions of ourselves—as well as the image others project onto us: strong, weak, smart, dumb, with common sense or without, industrious, lazy, silent, temperamental, and so on. Authority figures, advertisements, media and so forth hold vested power to influence these notions to personal, ideological or materially productive ends. Think for a minute how stress or burnout has typically been associated and collectivized in many occupations as a sign of weakness, failure, dysfunction and uselessness. Lauter and Rupprecht warn: “We call something archetypal when we believe that it is basic, necessary, universal; the trouble comes when we begin to believe that what we have valued is the essence of what is real” (10). Think for instance of the “real men” adages of the nineteen seventies and eighties, that culminated in the notion and the work *Real Men Don’t Eat Quiche*.

Borrowing from Erich Neumann, the authors quote: “The paradoxical multiplicity of [the archetype’s] eternal presence, which makes possible an infinite variety of forms of expression, is crystallized in its realization by man in time; its archetypal eternity enters into a unique synthesis with a specific historical situation” (11). Thus the traditional western American male archetype, stereotypically shorn of all femininity, fits well into the mines, cattle ranges, logging of old growth forests, and roughnecking hero types. The archetypal hero feels no pain thus can work tirelessly for long hours; is allegiant to the brand so has no labor or human rights issues; is a soldier in the ranks of a given capitalist endeavor, a hero and disciplined knight, who through exemplary service, discipline and self sacrifice rises up through the ranks of hierarchy to lead—and espouse the particulars of capitalist ideology of his chosen field. A slave driver, as it were, driving himself and then—if worthy—driving others, working for true capitalists as their proxy and administrator.

‘Environmentality’ refers to the complex of real space and place constructed through



perception, language and experience. In his preface to *The Future of Environmental Criticism*, Lawrence Buell acknowledges his preference for the term ‘environmental criticism’ over ‘ecocriticism,’ the more popularly utilized term in the discipline (viii). Buell believes ‘environmental’ approximates better than ‘eco’ the hybridity of the subject at issue—all ‘environments’ in practice involving fusions of ‘natural’ and ‘constructed’ elements—as well as the ecocriticism movement’s increasingly heterogeneous foci, especially its increasing engagements with metropolitan and/or toxified landscapes. When Lee and Hank have their knock-down, drag-out fistfight near the end of the novel, Kesey throws in the image of trash by the side of the road where they duke it out. Trash is a theme in the novel that mediates between the pristine natural world of the forest and river and the guttural impact of humans on the land, a mark of ‘culture’ as it were that further stakes the human claim on nature. Buell adds “issues of environmental equity that challenge early ecocriticism’s concentration on the literatures of nature and preservationist environmentalism,” arriving at a second wave ecocritical concern (viii).

While environmental justice is not well imaged in the novel, representations of environments that challenge awareness and environmental concern certainly are, even though the novel was written largely before Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* touched off the American environmental movement. Buell further elaborates on the notion of environments with the implication that environmentality suggests qualities of environments. At stake is the question of how writers “make “tangible” the notion of environment” (Buell, 29). At all times environmentality makes conscious the notion that representation enscribed in the service of belief and ideology, assumption and perception, mediates between the actual, physical, experienced environment and the representation the author describes or creates. Notably, Buell states that “all artistic work hinges upon the evocation of imagined worlds that may not bear a close resemblance to literal or

historical environments” (30). The question of whether Kesey is attempting a naïve representation of nature in what I term ‘the bobcat sequence’ versus whether he is trying to allude to something much more culturally constructed effectively demonstrates Buell’s insight. Elaborating on mimesis, the ‘discursive environment’ and reproduction of ‘sociohistorical environments’ (Buell, 44), the central question for Buell is how to understand “the disparate ways that literary texts evoke and particularize fictive environmentality” (30). Put another way, what is the theoretical relation between text and world? Critics Dana Phillips and Timothy Morton among others have been sharp in asserting the need to recognize art and rhetoric in even the most benign and apparently faithful rendering of environments through language. Environmentality then, in a postmodern era recognizing the fully permeating and pervasive mediation of language on reality, suggests the interpenetration of place and space, of being inseparable from historical construction, while simultaneously recognizing a difference between a real world and the linguistic rendering of experience.

‘Interpellation,’ coined by Marxist theorist Louis Althusser, first shows up in the essay “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards an Investigation)” in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (1971). Writing on the term in Althusserian thought, Paul Ricoeur begins by citing Althusser: “all ideology hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects, by the functioning of the category of the subject” (64). Ricoeur interprets Althusser’s view in a way that deftly suggests how judgment obscures and represses true subjecthood: “We are constituted as subjects through a process of recognition. The use of the term ‘interpellation’ is an allusion to the ideological concept of call, of being called by God. In its ability to interpellate subjects, ideology also constitutes them. To be hailed is to become a subject” (64). Rooting Althusser’s thought in Jacques Lacan’s mirror-structure, Ricoeur adds that for

Althusser: “to be a subject means to be subjected, to be subjected to an apparatus”—the ideological apparatus of the state (66). I suggest that the apparatus interpellating domination in the novel is situated in Judeo-Christian theology, the Protestant work ethic, capitalism and their co-construction of the traditional western American male archetype. Capitalist disciplines of thought and perspective largely constitute the apparatus. Ricoeur adds; “Ideology is troublesome because it makes impossible the true recognition of one human being by another” (66).

Psychology has used the terms behavioral and operant conditioning to characterize ways especially children are socialized. Tone of voice used in discipline, as well as successful (or unchallenged), attractive, modeled behavior (or its opposite and the use of shaming and moralities to nullify it) are strong emotional reinforcements of socialized behavior and norms. While interpellation results in Hank’s achievements in sports, work, fistfighting and modeling the desired—and most hated—male archetype, perhaps the best example of Ricoeur’s sense of recognition or its failure comes when Hank repeatedly tries to explain his actions to Lee, only to find that Lee is writing a script of expected domination over Hank’s motives, desires and behaviors. When Hank is determined not to be pushed around by the townfolk, Lee re-scripts Hank: “And is that why Joe Ben called you? Because he knew you wouldn’t want to miss a chance to come into town and take advantage of the public hostility?” (Kesey, 321).

Consider for a moment the workscape and the stages of capitalism the novel suggests. Passing mention is made of the Hudson’s Bay Company, alluding to the fur trade that was perhaps the earliest of corporate enterprises in the Pacific Northwest. Trappers would have negotiated with natives for information about the wildlands and their bounty, for scouting, warning and labor. Uncooperative or opposed natives would have been disciplined, bought off or exterminated, if not avoided. Trappers may have consumed the rugged lifestyle and the glory it

made for them, intermittently seeking relief from hard work, constant vigilance and deprivation with whiskey, whores and gambling. Perhaps they started their own trapping outfit or bought land and retired to farm or ranch, a quick, sure—if risky—way to a grubstake and a little bit of capital. We enter Kesey's tale through Henry and father Jonas, arriving at Wakonda lured by the dream of carving out one's place in the world in a prefabricated capitalist enterprise. Jonas sends capital ahead to buy a feed store. Henry—who bears the brunt of the family's fiscal and social demise when Jonas absconds with the feedstore assets and flees town—signs away the feedstore to a dominating capitalist schemer who hides his power and money behind the rhetoric of frontier communalism. Henry comes of age when logging in the Pacific Northwest is the next big gold rush, the majority of workers bit by the get rich quick scheme, the myth of wealth for the common worker, who spends his money without choice either in the company town, or amongst parasitic retailers just as eager to feed off the boom, the national capitalist market boom for lumber, charging an arm and a leg for sundries and fineries. The reader can imagine lumberjackers, beat from the pains and domination of long, regimented days of performance, productivity and constant threat of physical harm, mobbing town on a Saturday night only to go home broke on Sunday, perhaps having their sins chastised by the hellfire and brimstone of a preacher, ready to begin it all again on Monday. Henry's demonstration of the rhetoric needed to rouse and control labor disappears the capitalist corporate interest in raw materials driving cheap, efficient, productive, expendable labor in the heroism and sublimity of conquest, of subduing the wild West.

Herein lies the need for a mythical male archetype to aspire to, to extract resources on a grand national and international scale, the need for a voluntary enlistment in domination, more for the accoutrements of being hailed and recognized as a 'real man' than for a fair piece of the

pie in the American dream. A working class lifestyle emerges of moderate, well built homes, a truck or car, a television, money for sundry consumer items, and the ability to stay afloat in the seasonal cycles of logging, in the market ups and downs as conglomerates buy out small, local enterprises, in the wake of the machine that speeds up production, dumbs down skill, and routs plentiful labor in an increasingly smaller and smaller game of musical chairs. Meanwhile the baby boom mass produces labor, replete with eyes for becoming the ideal dominant male, born into unconscious styles of socialized wanting and consumption: up and coming modern conveniences, new and more expensive pastimes, the oppressiveness of keeping up with the Joneses. Here then lies the point of capitalism of the early 1960's of a rural logging town in the Pacific Northwest, aspiring to a working class lifestyle of plenty and just scraping by, longing for a new and improved washer and dryer and having to make payments to get it. Logging no longer is about taming the West, but about keeping 'the show' going, holding on to the vestiges of an earlier, more rugged, less domesticated masculinity; winning the battle while losing the war. Old growth trees are mostly gone; the once rambling, unlimited quest become riding the logging truck up logging roads, the boat up to the mill, living in much smaller footsteps than one's forebears. A few short years from America's tech boom, its rainbow starburst of materialist possibilities, work life and place are already dominated by heavy duty mechanization and the leviathan of national and up and coming global markets—and their vicissitudes. Postmodern global capitalism is perhaps not yet a fait accompli, but looks quite inevitable.

The kid in *The Kid Loses to Domination* is Hank, and Hank loses his freedom in the necessary learning and living up to the expectations of the dominant male. He loses an ability to express his sensitivities and care openly and straightforwardly. He loses ways of relating to others and the more than human world that don't fit into the narrow socialization of proper male

society constructed in the novel under the traditional western American male archetype. He becomes good at shutting down criticism and beating back physical conflict with his fists. He avoids as long as he can until he realizes that avoidance merely postpones the inevitable. He loses all the valuable, more feminine ways of relating to the world around him in pursuing the calling he's capable of aspiring to in becoming the dominant male, a symbol as well as a being to be reckoned with, an idol as well as an accursed enemy. What he loses in his odyssey into manhood he regains in a private subjecthood partitioned off for practically all but the reader to see, while his community role and his choices in managing that role are still largely dictated—interpellated—by the people around him. Though Hank in the end loses to domination; loses to the socialization of his dad and the narrow, rigid interpellations of the community in which he grows up and lives; loses to the patriarchal ideology underwritten by capitalism and driving the social megamachine in the novel; he evolves his dad's strict adherence to the traditional western American male archetype to include a subjecthood that considers others even while stuck in the rhetoric, logics and behavioral reactivities of the interpellated archetype. Sometimes this unique subjecthood is recognized by other characters; much more often it is only revealed through Hank's private narrations and the amorphous third person narrator's sympathetic iterations of Hank.

High capitalism would never have been possible without a form of discipline and conformity provided by logics of domination stretching back through the protestant work ethic; puritanical beliefs grounded in the expectations of a Judeo-Christian god, the original Western patriarch, textually constructed, resisting evolution and socially reproduced by males. Jonas, the earliest of Stamper patriarchs in the novel, sees himself and the respect of his Kansas community—seeing him off to his dream in 1898 Oregon—as evidence of successful conformity

to patriarchal commandment, evidence of his godliness, his place in the hierarchy of the saved. Children, with a long philosophical history of bestial beginnings, of savage tendencies needing domestication, ignorant of the hierarchy of salvation, are to keep their place. While his three grinning boys have prodded Jonas into the move, Jonas “frowns to remind them that...it is still his decision and no other that allows it, his decision and his permission...” “It is the good lord’s will,” he repeats and the two younger boys drop their eyes” (Kesey, 15). Frowns and glares constitute unspoken body language, a rhetoric of domination. Jonas asserts dominance over his kids with this pattern of tonal, rhetorical and behavioral expression, which will return again when Henry dominates teenage Hank and young Leland later in the novel. The relation of bigger, more physically powerful adult male to smaller, less powerful child, suggesting fear alone has the power to shame and dominate, to turn down the eyes of the children, meets its match in Henry Stamper, Jonas’ eldest. At the depot, Henry “continues to meet his father’s stare” (15). As if looking defiantly into the eyes of God, Jonas sees this challenge in religious rhetorical terms, offering much greater rhetorical force and social leverage. He’s so taken aback by “something so blatantly triumphant and blasphemous” in the boy’s glare “that the fearless patriarch’s words stop in his throat” (15). Jonas revs up his fear and the religious rhetoric when he recognizes that look as “the leer of Satan” (15).

Though Jonas reflects on the Stamper curse of ever wandering westward, the evident pattern is for Stamper boys to hit their rebellious teenage years and—what else are we to presume?—utilize domination learned from bible spouting fathers and male social groups to challenge and force complacent fathers into a move. The son bests the father in a duel of beliefs, belief in a better material existence, assertion of a bigger, bolder material desire, utilizing his father’s own rhetoric, forcing the father into conflict over erstwhile rebellious tendencies, his

own desire for adventure, as against his calling to settle down. Was the son calling into question the sufficiency of the father to provide enough? Suggesting physical dominance, those left behind “were either too old or too sick to continue moving west” (16-17).

In Kesey’s work, the eldest son always bests the father. Hank will best Henry not by moving on, but by moving up the ladder and assuming control of the Stamper timber operation. Part of this rise in hierarchy of decision-making and assertion is out of pure physicality. Hank wins practically every fistfight he endures, a testament to his physical prowess. Henry becomes too old and handicapped by logging injuries to do the work, just as pioneers could become too old to uproot themselves and enter a strange new world, dependent upon their own capacity for manual labor—or their children’s—to get by. “Woman, the boy an’ me is talkin’” sums up the differential between women and men in the novel well, though some actions—such as Myra’s seduction of teenage stepson Hank, and the necessary reliance of other women on prostitution and clam digging to eek out a living—evinced at least some form of empowerment, however morally subordinated (17).

The rebellious sons of Jonas, rebelling in part against their father’s domination, manifest contempt for their old man after arriving in Oregon. Jonas Stamper seems reminiscent of Kurtz in Joseph Conrad’s colonialist story *Heart of Darkness*, if only inasmuch as he goes off the deep end. “He getting’ so he look more glare-eyed and twitch-lipped and skittish ever’ day,” the boys say (24). The triple denigrating, thrice subordinating symbology of animals, race and women is used to reinforce Jonas’ loss of his dominant position in their collective consciousness: “like a dog comin’ into heat...you reckon he’s been slippin’ off to Siskaloo for some of that red meat?” (24). The boys band together against their father, but the close reader might wonder if Henry has posed a coup, replacing his father as the dominant male in their social group,



modeling right and wrong and enforcing with moralities, sarcastic humiliation, perhaps even fists.

As grief and grieving are often considered signs of weakness in the traditional western American male archetype, so too grief and grieving become central aspects of the reproduction or evolution of domination in the novel. By 1903, Jonas is stricken by the overwhelming nature of living in the Oregon rainforest, “the rain chewing away at the countryside” (23). Henry and his brothers, hardened from their father’s domination, toy with him in contempt and mock dignification, tuning their perceptions to look for fear: “”Sir,” Henry would ask, smiling, “You don’t look so perky. Is something grievin’ you?” “Grieving?” Jonas fingered the Bible” (23-24). In the bobcat vignette, Hank will show Foucaultian panoptic self-scorn as he begins to cry in spite of himself at the loss of the bobcat kittens, in front of his father Henry and cousin Joe Ben. The reader may ask: Is he grieving the loss of the kittens, or loss of proof of his dominant status? Soon after, when Hank’s mother dies, Henry is portrayed as one who saw no sense in grieving, and leaves straightway with funeral carnation in lapel to the East Coast to hunt for another wife. Henry’s reaction to death—“the dead’s dead...get ‘em in the ground and look to the live ones”—suggests the way he’s brought Hank up to view grief (32). When Hank loses the bobcat kittens and loses his composure in the boat, Henry extends Hank’s rationale, but the reader might suppose both were suggested and validated by Henry. Hank says; “It’s a dirty deal...a crappy deal...”Sure,” the old man said. “The ways the football bounces”” (108). Of course, Henry was also known for drowning barn cats by the sackful.

Capitalist self interest and monopoly—in the form of rich and self appointed governor, mercantilist and moneylender Jeremy Stokes—construct the social relations that Jonas and sons Henry, Aaron and Ben enter into when moving to Wakonda. Workers as well as owners

eliminate “nature as a real, intrinsically significant, autonomous entity,” (Worster, *Empire*, 26) paralleling Marx’s notions of progress. Environmental historian Donald Worster, following ecological history pioneer Karl Wittfogel, asks: “How in the remaking of nature do we remake ourselves?” (*Empire*, 30). Worster argues on the one hand for a regional history—cognizant of capitalist underpinnings—distinguishing people and place. (“New West,” 146-147). On the other, Worster calls in *Rivers of Empire* for perspectives recognizing fundamental underlying issues common in human technological responses to environment (p.21). The need for capitalist wealth, status and power in the novel emerges when Jonas abandons the Stamper family, and Henry, the eldest and most rebellious challenger of Jonas’ dominant patriarchal role in the family, is shamed into economic submission morally and materially. Jonas absconded with the family’s feed store monies, and the family gets by on Stokes family charity—for a price.

Though turn of the century Native Americans in the novel go unnamed and are described as fat and lazy, what is hidden in this racist, moralist, capitalist logic is the fact that their subsistence needs were well provided.<sup>4</sup> Curiously, the Stamper family has no apparent skills—though certainly there are plenty of subsistence resources in the area, according to the novel—for living in self sufficiency. This is an important nuance, because Henry’s shame—the Stokes’ domination, Jeremy’s son Boney Stokes’ rhetorical domination over Henry—initiates his rise to capitalist conquest and domination early in the twentieth century. Capitalism and its dependence on money and imported goods is already the only available mode of living for settlers in the novel. Same age relations—Boney and Henry—are further antagonized and hierarchized when Boney uses his father’s pioneering rhetoric as a morality to coerce conformity in the dominating capitalist scheme of his father: “We are founders of a new frontier, workers in a new world; we must all strive together. A united effort” (Kesey, 29). This manipulative communal morality used

for private gain drives independent rebellion central to the novel, central to Stamper rise to economic dominance, central to Stamper participation in ascent of the logging industry and gutting of old growth forest, central to the choice to scab for Wakonda Pacific rather than conform to union and community rhetoric, in the later, more central year of the novel, 1961.

Boney's assertion of domination occurs through this morality, but other assertions leverage his domination. Perhaps most insidious, the outspoken Boney—with the rest of the town whispering its validity and fortifying its dominating force—leverages the shame and morality of Jonas' abandonment as a sign of weakness, the sins of the father visited upon son and family, the kernel of resentment that will drive capitalist achievement against the town later in the novel. Boney says; "I wouldn't want to see you forced to leave by the untamed elements. Like...some others" (30), alluding on the one hand to Henry's father. But the passage also alludes to the ideology of capitalism and its manipulative leverage, into capitalist modes of production as well as ideological reproduction that in Plumwood's terminology dualizes nature. Untamed elements are waiting on human domestication, waiting to be converted into valuable capitalist resources for production and export. Drawing on Frankfurt School critical theorist Max Horkheimer, Donald Worster points to the explicit need to study the "ideological matrix" compelling capitalist constructs of society, "especially those ideas that concern nature" (*Empire*, 54). Henry sets the stage for the central social issue driving the novel. Rejecting the pyramid scheme of a co-op, he says; "I reckon we'll whup 'er...without being members of anything" (Kesey, 30). Laughing a "ferocious laugh" at the idea that the untamed elements could run off another Stamper, Henry "used that same ferocity to build a small fortune and a logging operation" (30). Domination—and Henry's response to it—are couched from beginning to end in capitalist terms.

Chronologically, we have little more of significance before the bobcat vignette to help the reader fully characterize the culture of patriarchal domination in the Stamper family, other than the plaque Jonas sends to Henry when Hank is born. Henry's untempered, longstanding outrage at his father—for creating a lifelong circumstance of domination to fight against with the Stokes and Wakonda—rears its head as Henry paints over the plaque with yellow machine paint and the words: “NEVER GIVE A INCH!” (31). The quote muffles an oblique reach of dominance from Henry's father in Kansas, and Boney and Henry posture over moralities of domination in the scene.

After the bobcat vignette, after the funeral for Hank's mom, Henry returns from the East Coast with Myra, a twenty-one year old, third year Stanford co-ed to Henry's fifty years. Leland is born when Hank is twelve. Previous critics wrote typically about the oedipal plot formed by Hank, Leland and Myra. Leland constellates all of the weak, failing, subdominant characteristics necessary for the binary that forms the traditional western American male archetype. Kesey formulates the archetype ideally in Henry and in an evolved and more femininely informed way in Hank. Some of the accompanying binaries are explicit: strong/weak; attention/neglect; dominant/'nigger'-woman-animal. Myra seduces Hank—turning her attention away from Leland—when Hank is sixteen. Leland and Myra leave for the East Coast at the same time Hank decides to join the Marines, signaling the end of the relationship. On the boat ride across the river, twelve year old Leland cries, and Henry says to his distant and neglected son “Must have been somethin' godawful rich to make you so sick” (42). Notice the patterns of domination in this scene. Henry doesn't ask what's bothering Leland, he just assumes, and the assumption suggests the old cliché that rich food makes for weak men. Leland coldly and calculatedly uses the same line when Hank finds Leland sleeping with his wife and throws up, suggesting the

extent to which Leland received it as an expression of domination. In the boat, Leland stammers angrily at Hank, whom he has repeatedly watched through a hole in the wall having sexual relations with his mother: “You...just...wait” (42). Hank, with much more to lose if Henry finds out his secret, says; “You’re lucky I don’t bust your scrawny little neck” (42). Hank fumes at Leland because it’s the revelation of his spying that appears to have caused Myra to leave. Hank exercises moral domination, calling Lee’s peeping “a lowdown, crummy” act (42). But Henry has the last say. “What...In God’s creation! Are you two talking about,” Henry explodes (42). Hank and Leland’s eyes drop reflexively to the bottom of the boat. Hank coerces compliance from Leland, effectively following up his threat: “No big deal, right bub?” (42). Perhaps, as a boy in a traditional male culture, he’s roughhoused Leland along the way, though brotherly concern has been present as well. Lee nods weakly, well aware that he has no male allies.

Henry “insisted on raising his firstborn to be as strong and self sufficient as himself,” and “paid little attention to his second son” (35). Hank’s achievements and accolades compounded neglect at every turn, Lee claims. Traditional literary analysis might focus on Lee’s villainy, a wicked turn of fate for not being or besting his brother. But according to the structure of domination that Jane Goodall observed in chimpanzees, addressed more fully in the essay “The Kid Loses to Dominance,” a psycho-critical analysis might proceed on what constituted Lee’s sense of inferiority and his need to challenge the dominant—in order of rank. Lee, now in his early twenties, fails to execute his own suicide just as he receives a postcard from Oregon calling him home. The logging operation needs non-union family workers to fulfill a contract. Hank writes ambiguously at the bottom: “You should be a big enough guy now, bub” (43). Lee sees this as a white glove challenge across the face, but the recurrent strain of concern Hank shows for Lee throughout the novel—though toying with Lee in youth, frustrated with Lee’s (passive-

aggressive) adult lack of workingman's discipline, fighting with him as an adult—suggests a different reading. More true to Hank, he tries to say that Lee should have a big enough, strong enough physical body for lumberjacking. Immediately Lee's in his head in a pot/pill stupor, an untrustworthy narrator, talking to his roommate Peters on the phone from the bus station. Lee says of the scrawled challenge at the bottom of the postcard, "It was that way all my time at home—brother Hank always held up to me as the man to measure up to—and it's been that way ever since. In a psychologically symbolic way, of course" (69). In the span of a couple of hours, up out of the ashes of near suicide, Lee defines his new mission in life. He's going home to, in Peters' words, "measure up to this psychological symbol;" in his own, to "pull him down...until I have settled my score with this shadow from my past...I'll go on feeling inferior and inadequate" (69). The challenge Leland believes he must take on is in one sense repeated in every fight in the novel, whether by fists, by wits, by male challengers or society at large. Even women do not escape this pattern of domination amongst themselves in the novel. In her discussion of relevant research, Jane Goodall drew on primatologist and comparative psychologist Robert Yerkes' work to assert the mimicry of the male pecking order by female chimpanzees (*Chimpanzees*, 437). Lee says it wasn't even Hank's doing so much as home's doing, school, the townsfolk, "they." Those imprisoned by and reproducing the dominant mindset. Hank "held up to me," rather than the actual culprit.

Two unique features make Kesey's logics of domination very remarkable, features the following essays elaborate upon. First, *Sometimes* offers a remarkably articulate portrait of the expression of domination and its consequences among males directly involved with nature, as well as in relation to women, blacks, and Native Americans. Second, the novel shows in fictive form how boys become ensnared in the hegemony of what appears here, in my estimation, as

traditional western American male domination. Living up to the role of the dominant—or becoming the dominant, as Leland desires—is far less willed and far more interpellated by a society infused with, embedded in and shackled by the logics of domination. Kesey brilliantly modeled subtle consciousness and morality-based forms of domination, coercions to conformity, that are if anything alive and all too well in much of contemporary culture in the American west. Kesey’s novel articulates what these logics have looked like, how they may have been instilled in children, and how children take up the roles of the dominant in youth and adulthood. The novel offers a portrait of assimilation of the apparatuses of domination used to perpetuate (or altered to evolve) a culture’s longstanding domination logics and practices.

At the beach, Lee remembers running away from Hank while trick-or-treating on Swede Row back when he was a kid. He says; “The only thing I was really scared about was that he might be watching when I jumped or yelled or something” (Kesey, 306). We might imagine his fear will be recognized by a lieutenant in the army of Henry’s domination, one who has come to know and enforce the rules of domination. Lee was afraid his fear would be recognized and shame would come down on him from within the family. Hank, in Lee’s mind, occupies the role of the subdominant between himself and Henry, a position not unlike the slave driver in slave history. Age and level of indoctrination—or capacity to recite, police and enforce the party line—constitute another level of the hierarchy. The narrator adds to Lee’s story of running away from home: “he knew that what he had done had banished him forever from his home; he knew what old Henry and all of them thought of scaredy cats” (307).

Lee indulges deeply in fantasies of inferiority that are structured by the hierarchy and metaphors of domination in the novel as well as in classic literature. His elaborate, drug induced hallucination of Stamper Hall and the domination that occurs there characterizes his entire

mindset of inferiority. Rhetorics of domination permeate the lengthy, exaggerated telling. He envisions Hank as a giant, surly lumberjack, a giant dominator, calling forth a “horde of kinsmen” with “manly physiques...ruggedly handsome” to pick up spineless, protoplasmic Lee (77). The shifting narrator, now barely discernable as against Lee and his fantasy, characterizes Joe Ben in the hierarchy as the “Smallest Fellow” who “trips in his haste” and is picked up “between a great thumb and forefinger” by the monstrous Hank, who “regards him with the kindly scorn one might reserve for a cricket” (77).<sup>5</sup> Elsewhere Lee repeatedly imagines and dialogically asserts himself as the dominant beneath Hank over Joe Ben. Hank the hallucination scolds Joe Ben: “Don’t you know that it’s call to get you drummed right out of the clan if you keep on?” (77). Domination doesn’t allow for falling, for failure; but the moment one can’t fall, can’t risk, can’t experiment, can’t experience; one can only conform—and fear. Be perfect, or else. If Joe Ben is on the verge of ostracization, what chance does Lee have?

Lee is scooped up and carried to the house in a plastic bag, which only further separates Lee from things that ‘belong,’ as it were, in the ‘natural’ environment. As if imagining *Beowulf*, the clansmen carry Lee into “mighty Stamper Hall,” ruled by father Henry, portrayed as the bloodthirsty Henry the Eighth (78). Embellishing this truculent masculine fantasy is a wash of nature and dampness, “even in the severest drought” (78), a sure Jungian symbol, however repressed, of femininity. Lee vividly imagines the shame he brings to the Stamper men. Henry exercises moral domination over Hank, criticizing him for pulling “such a boner” (79). Hank excuses himself on the grounds that the family is in dire need due to a labor shortage, even if it means scraping the bottom of the barrel. Henry exerts a misogynistic logic of domination. Rather than the usual inbreeding with cousins, “We need examples by gawd, like my own boy, Hank there, like the stock I turn out” (79). The interpellation of the dominant—in Michel Foucault’s



terms the dehumanization of the docile body—creates loyal subjects all to God, masculinity and domination, in the service of a highly permeated, insidious, historically co-located logic of domination.

Lee imagines Henry's "stoic features shatter with humiliation" (79) at the sight of him in the plastic bag. Henry's humiliation has to come from somewhere, and Henry isn't a god-fearing man. He is, however, subject to the domination of the societies he's a part of, subject to peer pressure, however defiant he is against it, and this constitutes another major theme in the novel. The reader may be used to rhetorics about succumbing to peer pressure as a sign of weakness. But in a small and isolated society—one that reiterates, with emotional chest-beating, arbitrarily constructed moral critique, such as the shame Henry and his family should feel over his father's abandonment of the family—peer pressure becomes a powerful form of thought control. Even if Hank knows better than to swallow his father's morality; his place in the family, let alone his social standing in the community is threatened. This threat will be taken to extreme when the town refuses to do business with the Stampers, utilizing passive aggression on all the family members to show their disapproval of the Wakonda Pacific (WP) logging contract. Hank justifies bringing Lee back home in Lee's fantasy "to keep ourselves free of racial pollution," and separates the family along racial and ethnic lines as no "ordinary people; we're Stampers!...the most important thing was to keep them ordinary people from by God ever fergettin' it!" (80). There's a Faulknerian, southern gothic element to Lee's elaborate fantasy. Racism, sexism and anti-Semitism are deeply rooted in the Stamper clan consciousness, from Leland to Henry. Henry is by far the most indulgent, the most allied, but the logics and rhetorics of bigotry are deeply embedded in at least the male side of the entire family. Lee's fantasy suggests, however, that part of this unconscionable rhetoric is located in a deep seated need for superiority, for distinction,

and out of superiority and distinction, recognition. I would argue that these rhetorics are not self-willed. Blaming the individual conceals the dominant role society plays in constructing and maintaining the logics and rhetorics of domination. Social circumstances reproduce hierarchically structured domination, in a collective consciousness that egregiously arrogates and arranges beings along continuums ranging from heaven to hell; white male to animal, plant and insect; with reason and a soul to without; assigning value and purpose to all.

What I see in Lee's elaborate fantasy is less the constructed Stamper masculinity and domination, and more an amalgam of historic U.S. cultural tendencies in the late 1950's and early 1960's. Television and other news stories on racist southern whites and normalized racism would have been frequent as conflict over integration and equality reached a boiling point. The era of global nationalism epitomized by Hitler and Germany has tended to conceal America's own supremist tendencies. On a more interpersonal level, it seems likely that the heavy kidding and examples of appropriate masculine behavior that Lee received, especially as a child, worked more to reinforce expectations of domination, threats of status loss and ostracization for not measuring up than to simply signify fun, games, and normal male society. While the novel runs rife with social relations that are structured by domination and challenge—and many that strikingly are not—I will leave a number of these to the final essay. A key aspect of domination in the novel hinges on fistfighting, on physical domination as a means to control threat and establish or challenge hierarchy. Like Boney's suggestion to young Henry that the "untamed elements" could dominate and scare off the rest of the Stamper clan; fistfighting, passive aggression and garden variety acts of being obtuse characterize the townfolk's typical participation in communication exchanges involving domination or perceptions of interaction with a dominant—or a challenger. To stay is to fight in the novel. The culture frames staying that

way. Fighting—or accepting your subordinate role and the styles of communication and gossip that come along with it. The consciousness of the community is framed—and allows for framing—in no other way. Fistfighting may seem passé in modern American culture, relegated to high school bullies and blue collar dogfights, but physical abuse remains a significant form of domination. Domination against women, gays, blacks, other minorities, and children, who far too often still turn up as victims of brutality. Workplace bullying and passive aggression, though often concealed behind states' right-to-work laws, certainly continues to occur as well.

Fistfighting in *Sometimes* may be called up by the usual stereotypes of the American West: to defend one's honor; to call someone out, or call them on the truth of their outspokenness; in retaliation for sleights of one kind or another, especially for taking unfair advantage in other competitions. But a beat-down in the novel always also is about challenging hierarchies of dominance that are set up and maintained socially. If everybody wasn't saying that Hank was too big for his britches, there would be little reason to take him down a notch. If everyone in town wasn't so envious and resentful of the fact that Hank Stamper's decisions have made him and Stamper Enterprises better off than the rest of them, they wouldn't feel the need to pull him down. And physical violence in the historic Pacific Northwest logging culture, however tangential, doesn't end with the mid-twentieth century union monkey-wrenching and shady acts of brutality in the night represented in the novel. As late as the 1990's in historic environmental conflict involving the logging industry, violence remained an act far from last resort. And, as Abu Graib showed the world, acts of domination, physical abuse and sexual humiliation are still tools of warfare and conquest for at least some Americans.

Hank doubtlessly earned a reputation as a fistfighter by the time he was ten, when he bragged about the bobcat kittens then lost them in a flood on the day he was taking them to

school for show and tell. Who else had captured and raised a wild predator? The stakes were high, and in my arguments I assert that they were socially, rather than individually constructed as well. When he shows up at school without them—and in a fragile emotional mood because of his grief over their loss—the kids pick on him, taunt him for all his empty braggadocio, and only the readers of the story are aware that there is grief involved in shutting up the most challenging and mudslinging of his opponents with his fists. Joe Ben later interpellates Hank's inevitability to fight, even as Hank has resisted being called out throughout his life. The archetype of the traditional western American male, however, is what their peers expect, and their framing of situations is such that they will not—until the end—be disappointed. Joe Ben and many others in the novel love a fight when it doesn't involve them. They live vicariously through the Wild West, shootout notion of the fistfight, and Hank is the hero and top gun to beat. As Joe Ben recounts their high school days, he reflects on Hank's avoidance of the inevitable, when Joe Ben can see he's aware of it. They pull up to school one morning in the first days of their senior year, and the other jocks are standing there with a new guy. Next to the new guy's extensive boxing credentials, Hank has won division wrestling in the region, and can "hold a double edged ax straight out arm's length for eight minutes and thirty-six seconds" (327), beating the best Joe Ben's ever seen by nearly four and a half minutes. The new guy's standing behind Guy Wieland, who taunts Hank about the rumor that he's been sleeping with his stepmother. Joe Ben calls Hank's "littlest smile" a plea, "to lay off because he's tired...after a whole summer of just that sort of thing and fighting about it" (326). The accompanying glare of threat shuts Guy up. Up steps Tommy the ringer, "like in the Westerns" Joe says, "and I say to myself right at that instant that Hank knows already what's going to one of these days have to happen" (326). The boys talk nonchalantly, the way exchanges before fights almost always happen in the novel. They're

friendly, and this isn't expected to be an episode to split the community, but to unify it. Hank's own take, much later in life when embroiled with the entire community over the WP contract, is bizarrely compassionate.<sup>6</sup>

Joe Ben clearly describes the passive aggression and bullying that Hank has gone through over the past year, interpellating an inevitable fight. Hank resists a chance to take a pot shot at Tommy, but "His hands are shaking," (328) a visceral sign of stress. He's so tired of it that he cuts school the rest of the day and several days after. Joe Ben lets him know "you might as well come on back to school and get on with it because you...are going to fight it out sooner or later" (329). Hank is thoroughly interpellated by Joe Ben and the rest of the school boys. Hank will have to fight, and "always will, too...from now until doomsday... with Tommy Osterhaust or Floyd Evenwrite or Biggy Newton, or with the falling apart donkey [engine] or the berry vines or the river, because it is your lot and you know it is" (330). When Tommy finally picks a fight, he loses far more, and everybody blames Hank for losing district and state football titles. This scissoring back and forth—everyone itching to see Hank beat, then blaming Hank for the repercussions afterward—occurs repeatedly in the novel. The high school kids interpellate a fighter, then, when he wins, interpellate a challenger. Similarly the townsfolk, later in time. By the end of the novel, however, the people are afraid, very afraid I argue because what they lose is not the champion, the dominant, but the traditional western American male archetype itself. Hank's demise—in classic Shakespearean and Greek tragic mode—dooms the town, as well as the most hopeful challenger Biggie Newton, to a life without anything to fight against, without an ideal to aspire to.

In the final essay of this collection I will return to discuss in more detail the patterns, the logics and rhetorics of domination in other characters in the novel as well as this final loss, and

what it may mean for Hank as well as the future of masculine identity. First, however, I will delve more deeply into the natural history of the region that Kesey portrays, because however favorably or unsavory we view a society like the one Kesey has characterized, the close reader of history as well as Kesey's text cannot deny that the interpellation, the reproduction of domination in the novel has resulted in ways of being that have had detrimental effects on the natural and wild environment. We read repeatedly of Hank throwing his finished sack lunch into the woods, throwing his cigarettes onto the ground, throwing a fuel canister into the river, and so on. While the garbage piles up in the novel, the story Kesey tells intimately ties human domination—as we have heard it addressed in Plumwood's theory as well as in deep ecology and other critical theory time and time again—to domination and degradation of the environment. Our job as activist readers is to recognize the reality—and its distinctions—behind the art. Like reading blithely of choleric dead floating along the river in Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *Love in the Time of Cholera*, there's a message buried in *Sometimes* that has gone too long unnoticed. That message addresses social as well as environmental injustice that the world still all too merrily tolerates.

As the following essays delve into ecopsychological insights concerning the benefit of nature for children, perhaps the reader will begin to look in other literature for examples of the power of nature to create a better world for us all. And what of nature writers? Could it be that in addition to the deceptively passive texts upon which ecocriticism has cut its teeth, nature writers offer a theory for viewing the world as well? Immersed in the senses, always embarking on a sea of curiosity, never satisfied with the categories in which nature has been put, never content until first person experience has occurred to the fullest and richest extent, always showing up in the here and now. I offer the use of nature writing in just such a way as another possible lens from

which to view Kesey's work, in the hopes of getting to know the proverbial elephant in the room, the elephant experienced in another well known proverb by a handful of blind men.

## THE KID GOES OUT INTO NATURE

*...as Frederic Jameson remarks of “the great realistic novelists,” descriptive objectivism must also be understood in some measure as an ideologized strategy of concealment if not intent.<sup>7</sup>*

—Lawrence Buell

The kid goes out into nature, and finds three bobcat kittens. The kid takes the kittens home and makes them his own, though something deeper goes on as well. The kittens are killed in a river washout, and the kid faces issues of domination from the male culture in his family as well as his school. In a nutshell this summarizes an extended vignette Ken Kesey writes for Hank Stamper, one of four major male characters, in Kesey’s 1964 novel of a Pacific Northwest logging family, *Sometimes a Great Notion*. This essay deals primarily with the first part of the aforementioned triptych: the kid goes out into nature. Cheryl Glotfelty in her essay “Literary Studies in an Age of Environmental Crisis” lays down a number of first wave interrogations pertinent to the ecocritical task. One such interrogation asks: “How is nature represented?” (Glotfelty, xviii). Glotfelty asserts that “human culture is connected to the physical world, affecting it and affected by it” (xix). Literary texts are not written in a vacuum. Not only are the author’s imagination and storylines often closely tied to real places, real people and real situations, the author must rely on familiar landmarks and cultural benchmarks in order to provide a compelling narrative that makes any sense to the reader.

While representations of nature in fiction are perhaps considered less restrained than we would expect in say, first person nature writing, they can serve to bring us into a deeper



relationship with an actual given place and historic time, as well as offer a vital point of triangulation for the reader. All the more so the environments and environmentality both imagined and drawn from actual places for the writing. As Hank Stamper recalls a significant moment from his childhood, profoundly complicated by the author's use of enjambed multiple narrative voices, we get a sense of environmentality, of interpenetrating nature and culture, in the berry thicket where he was to discover three bobcat kittens: "When the spring sun was bright above the thicket, enough light filtered down through the leaves so he was able to see, and he would spend hours on his hands and knees exploring the smooth passageways" (Kesey, 101).

Lawrence Buell characterizes environmentality as a second wave ecocritical concern, "suggesting human history's implication in natural history" (25). Glen Love elaborates on this notion in his essay "Revaluing Nature: Towards an Ecological Criticism." Love is concerned first and foremost with directly confronting the litany of wounds caused by the ongoing and deepening ecological crisis, brought to us by the industrial revolution, mass consumer consciousness and the population boom, yet in a state of cultural succession to the rest of the human world. Next to this urgent consideration he posits a 'new pastoralism,' exemplified by Joseph Wood Krutch's life and work. He points to Krutch's recognition that humans are "a part of nature yet can become what [we] are only by being something also unique" (Love, 232). Love characterizes Krutch's awakening as "a growing awareness of interconnectedness between humankind and the more than human world" (232).

Author Ken Kesey grew up in Springfield, Lane County, Oregon. He spent his second decade there at the head of the Willamette Valley across the Willamette River from Eugene and the University of Oregon, between the low-lying Coast Range and the west slope of the towering Cascades. A high school graduate of 1953, he received his B.A. in 1957 from the University of

Oregon, already active in creative writing ahead of his 1958 Stanford fellowship in Wallace Stegner's creative writing program (Leeds, xi-2). Rachel Carson's paradigm-shifting 1962 environmental work *Silent Spring*—the generally accepted moment of birth for the modern environmental movement (Garrard, 1)—appeared the same year Kesey published *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. Radiocarbon dating had just emerged in the 1950's, C.D. Keeling had just started tracking CO<sub>2</sub> increases over Antarctica and Mauna Loa, Hawaii, and scientific consensus on global warming was decades away (Weart, 25, 36, 211).

Ethnographer Terre Satterfield in her book *Anatomy of a Conflict: Identity, Knowledge and Emotion in Old Growth Forests* roots clearcutting in the homesteading practices of early Oregon migration before 1855 (20). Environmental historian Richard White offers a detailed historic account of this practice in Island County, Washington in his text *Land Use, Environment and Social Change: The Shaping of Island County, Washington* (1980). Satterfield dates the commercial production of lumber in Oregon to the 1860's and 1870's. High-lead logging, an advent of industrial logging characteristic to Kesey's logging scenes, dates back to at least 1910 (Satterfield, p. 23). One end of the log is attached to an aerial line, greatly increasing retrieval rate from the forest. As early as 1912, Satterfield says an Oregon forester cautioned against the seeming inexhaustibility of the Pacific Northwest's forests (24). The Siuslaw National Forest, founded in 1908, covers much of western Lane County inland from the coast ("History and Culture," n.p.). While the region that would become the Willamette National Forest in eastern Lane County—along the west slope of the Cascades—had conservation measures in place as early as 1893, forest boundaries were not drawn until 1933 ("Brief," n.p.).

Weyerhaeuser Lumber was completing a large scale pulp mill, sawmill and processing compound in late 1948 just east of Springfield, the year Kesey turned thirteen. Traditional forest

practices were considered highly wasteful, taking only the most valuable logs, though remaining logging debris was at least left to re-nourish logged off areas. Pulp mills, maximizing utilization of sawmill as well as logging by-products, robbed the land of even this small compensation (Ficken, *Forested*, 172, 174; Weyerhaeuser, 2, 10-11). Moreover, sulfate and sulfite plants require large quantities of water for their processes.<sup>8</sup> As early as 1935, some pollutants in the Willamette river were identified as toxic. State regulation, however poor, was enacted as early as 1940. But the *Eugene Register-Guard* reported that by late 1946 oxygen deprivation had created a 37 mile long fish kill from Newberg—100 miles downstream from Eugene—to Portland. An Oregon State College sanitary engineer said “there is no fish living in that area except perhaps a few living in Portland sewers,” adding “this is not anyone’s fault, for the industries have a right to develop and have been very cooperative in trying to solve the problem” (“Pollution,” 1). Industries up the Willamette were largely—though not entirely—to blame. Weyerhaeuser’s new pulp and lumber facility was tied to a nearby sustained yield tree farm, an advent necessitated by timber depletion. Sustained yield, mandated only since 1946, meant that Weyerhaeuser would harvest a tract in the 155,000 acre farm as trees reached maturity, only about 80-100 years. Monoculture tree planting necessitated pesticide use as well. Lane County harvested a record billion-plus board feet of lumber in 1946 alone, and by 1948 West Coast mills were seeing record output (“Timber,” 1, Associated, 4). Sustained yield management mandates were changing the complexion of logging as well, threatening small logging operations and drawing accusations of “monopoly, communism and New Dealism” (Worth, 1-2). A 1946 Lane County survey, however, found that of 238 small mills polled, only two claimed to operate according to sustained yield, the majority expecting to exhaust nearby logging tracts in as little as one to four years (Worth, 1-2).

According to the Eugene Register-Guard's archives, rail car shortages, regional power outages and weather accounted for frequent work stoppages in the post-war era. In addition, the archives illuminate that numerous downsizings, temporary plant closures and the like have been recurrent since the 1980's, whether due to federally imposed timber-cutting restrictions or the vicissitudes of the national and global economies. A central plot of the novel hinges on a labor strike that folds when Hank scabs logs to the industrial lumber giant Wakonda Pacific. Old-growth timber cutting in the Pacific Northwest had moved largely to national forest land by the 1950's, while The Wilderness Act (1964), which permitted removal of Forest Service lands from timber cutting, was yet to be born. A late 1980's Wilderness Society inventory showing but 1.5 million of an original 25 million acres of old growth forest intact in the Pacific Northwest—as well as the heated and violent conflict over old-growth timber cutting—was decades away (Satterfield, 30).

After June 1961, Kesey and his family returned to Lane County, to Springfield and later Florence, Oregon, “a logging town near the ocean,” to research and begin writing *Sometimes* (Leeds, 3). U.S. Census Bureau statistics place 1961's world population at just over 3 billion people, less than half of today's population (“World...1950,” n.p.). U.S. mid-year population estimates ran just shy of 183 million people (“United...Demographic,” n.p.). Oregon boasted nearly 1.8 million residents in 1960, a little less than 163,000 living in Lane County, which stretches east from the Pacific Coast across the Coast Range, Eugene and Springfield to the crest of the Cascades (“Number,” 39-14). Springfield held little more than 19,000 inhabitants, Eugene almost 51,000 and Florence but 1,642 residents in 1960 (“Number,” 39-17, 18). Clearly, Kesey was writing about a very different world than we're living in today.<sup>9</sup> June 2011 projections expect 9 billion people on the planet by 2044 and as of April 3, 2012, the Bureau's world

population clock read 7,004,731,909 (“World...Information,” n.p.). One very invisible aspect of these statistics is the idea that writing about a very small logging town in the early 1960’s differs like night and day from the kinds of cultural experiences more often encountered in larger population densities. A tight knit, small town community would have had tools of domination collected over generations that larger, looser communities—where anonymity and select communal associations can occur—are less likely to impose. Given that the U.S. leads the world in modeling excessive consumption, population statistics also offer a clue to levels of consumption as well as to landscape changes due—in southwestern Oregon’s case—to logging, agriculture, industrial and urban development. Recent U.S. footprint statistics show we currently consume more than twice what we are capable of producing.(“United,,,America,” n.p.)<sup>10</sup>

Another way of looking at how consumption has changed in Lane County is to note for instance Starbucks, Walmart and McDonald’s locations. Florence has a Starbucks coffee shop, while 22 Starbucks locations spread across the greater Eugene-Springfield metropolis (“Store,” n.p.). Florence has no Walmart, but the greater Eugene-Springfield metropolis has three with three others up and down the Willamette Valley within 40 miles (“Choose,” n.p.). McDonalds? Florence has one, and the greater Eugene-Springfield metropolis has 14 (“Restaurant,” n.p.). McDonalds originated in California in 1955 (“Our Story,” n.p.). Walmart emerged in Arkansas in the same year as discount retailers K-Mart and Target, 1962 (“History,” n.p.). Starbucks first opened in 1971 in Seattle (“Our Heritage,” n.p.). While all this seems irrelevant to the reading of fiction, an ecocritical reading begs to be rooted in place, rooted in history, and rooted in ecology. Kesey in 1961 would seemingly have had little to write about in terms of fast food Styrofoam and paper garbage littering the roads, forests, beaches and waterways—but he writes about roadside and waterway pollution none the less.

Young Hank's childhood explorations take place near the river upstream from home: "Along its twenty miles numerous switchbacks and oxbows, sloughs and backwaters mark its old channel" (Kesey, 100). The river—the fictitious Wakonda Auga—receives a much more rhapsodic depiction in the first pages of the novel. Depicting concerns over the flooding river, the act of nature that kills the bobcat kittens, the narrator—suggesting what young Hank already knew of the ways of the river—offers a detailed description of the ecology of the river below the head of tide.<sup>11</sup> The Siuslaw River hits the Pacific coast just west of Florence, Oregon. The head of tide—the location where inland tidal flows become insignificant—for the Siuslaw River lies at its confluence with Berkshire Creek, a mile northwest of Mapleton, about 25 miles inland (Kroft, n.p.). Springfield lays only another forty miles east over the Coast Range on State Highway 126.

In his book *The Northwest Coast: A Natural History*, Stewart T. Schultz characterizes many key relationships that constitute the region's environment: "Seas, swells and global currents are powered ultimately by the rush of heat from equator to poles, tides rise and fall in response to the gravitational pull of the moon and sun" (33). Annual average precipitation from 1961 to 1990 ranged from 40 inches in the Willamette Valley—between the Coastal Range and the Cascades—to 80 inches on the west slope of the Cascades to 100 inches along the coast to the west slope of the Coastal Range ("Average," n.p.). Schultz adds that some nearby coastal regions have received up to 200 inches of precipitation in a year (25). Comparatively, Salt Lake City, Utah's normal annual precipitation is but 16.1 inches ("Salt," n.p.). Between 1971 and 2010, Las Vegas, Nevada's normal annual precipitation was but 4.19 inches ("Las Vegas, n.p.). Like flash floods in a desert, a region that can expect up to 200 inches of precipitation in a year—and has a rainy season—is one with a very large natural force to be reckoned with. A force that, however predictable humans may believe it to be—will come to be known as the wild,

organic thing that it is. In a sense, Hank's resignation at the end of the bobcat vignette to fight the river with everything he's got for the rest of his life is penance for his failed vigilance, for letting his guard down, for being cocky, on the night he loses the bobcats.

Bayard and Evelyn McConnaughey compliment Schultz's meta-view of the forces impacting the Pacific Coast around Florence with descriptions of El Niño and La Niña phenomena. El Niños "produce powerful storms and adverse weather conditions," due to increased convection currents arising in the Pacific and passing over the Pacific coast (McConnaughey, 411). These events warm the ocean about every four years, with major events occurring every decade. Though known to have occurred for tens of thousands of years, the McConnaugheys add they only appear in literature since 1726 (411). La Niña is a cold water phenomenon producing colder, wetter winters. Notable severe and long lasting El Niños particularly affecting the coastline from northern California to Washington occurred in 1940-41 and 1957-58 (McConnaughey, p. 412).

The Pacific Decadal Oscillation affords another layer of complexity to the climate of the Pacific Northwest, reversing cold and hot water extremes in the Pacific Basin, further amplifying or restraining El Niño and La Niña trends (McConnaughey, 411). As anthropogenic forces combine with natural ones, the McConnaugheys say temperatures in the northeastern Pacific ocean could increase as much as 1.5 to 4 degrees Celsius by 2100 (411). The authors tie surface temperature warming to historic events that deepen the thermocline in the waters, preventing rich, cold, nutrient-laden waters from surfacing to produce adequate phytoplankton production, impacting the entire marine food web.

These kinds of trends may seem unrelated to the fictional environment surrounding the Stamper residence, Hank's berry thicket upstream, and the logging tracts the family works

further upstream. But Kesey portrays a time and place where natural processes are already deeply affected by human impacts. The actual more than human world of the northern Pacific Coast has been transmogrified by regional and global human impact—in water, air and on land. The reader has good cause to wonder whether a novel positing the backdrop of the wild as the supreme dominant element against which male character is made—and patterns of domination are created—can be convincing; whether we have the capacity today to fully appreciate once highly feared, historic wild environs, fears—and conquest—giving rise to logics of domination. Kesey’s locale offers us the opportunity to imagine with complexity what he has only alluded to in his setting; the kinds of environmental dynamics the Stamper family would have faced over time. In a sense, a deeper understanding of the ecological dynamics present and probable offers us the opportunity to walk a mile in their shoes, though barely touching a lifetime of lived experience. Little has been studied about the effects of different environments and regions on personality, stress, or relational behavior, especially in constructing logics of dominance. Conversely, we might have much to say about the differences a sunny day or regular catastrophic possibilities like hurricanes make on our thinking, emotions, interactions with one another, and sense of security. Would we not expect a harsher, more inclement region to foster greater need for control and reliance on domination in humans?

The Siuslaw river mouth hosts one of nineteen significant estuaries in Oregon. David H. Johnson and Thomas A. O’Neil say “estuaries represent the dynamic interface of riverine and marine systems” (389). They go on to say in *Wildlife-Habitat relationships in Oregon and Washington* that “72 percent of the 367 species of birds in Oregon...use freshwater, riparian and wetland habitat” (371). Not only are these interfaces affected by both the changes in tidal forces and the changes in river discharge, they are in a constant state of change, much like the lower



twenty five miles of the Siuslaw, or Kesey's fictitious Wakonda Auga. Sedimentation has been a major impact of clearcut logging on estuaries, filling in bays much more rapidly than under natural conditions (Schultz, 318). Logging sediments block sunlight and inhibit estuarine plant growth. Floating logs downriver as Kesey describes would add debris and turbidity to the water going downstream, while organic pollution would promote anaerobic or oxygen-deprived conditions in the water as well (Schultz, 321). Given that the science of ecology had yet to become fully significant to recognition and management of natural and wild environments, it's easy to imagine that these ecological nuances would have escaped the environmentality of an early 1960's novel—which makes Kesey's highly detailed ecological descriptions all the more unusual. Yet the impacts of clear cutting—suggested by the stridency and succession of trees in the bobcat vignette, suggested by historical data with regards to the ubiquitous practice of clear cutting, used to open up farm land as well as create efficiency in early commercial logging practices—suggest heavy erosion and sedimentary impacts on estuaries would fit the time and place of the novel. Kesey—as well as young Hank—was already living in a natural environment radically influenced by human impact.

Schultz calls the natural estuarine habitat the most productive and variable habitat known. He adds that the estuarine mudflats collect plant and animal matter and fine sediments flushed from upland tributaries and held in place by estuarine calm, often a succession stage to salt marshes and eelgrass beds (Schultz, 149). In life as in the novel, the river giveth and the river taketh away. Northern harriers, ospreys, peregrine falcons and bald eagles (though decimated by widespread DDT use before the 1972 ban) are common, frequent predatory birds of the coastal region around Florence (Schultz, 206-207). The northern spotted owl, one of the most iconic species of the Endangered Species Act, has defined itself in the Coast Range as well as the

Cascades, though old growth forest is much scarcer in the former. The owls “forage, roost and nest almost entirely within the old growth of their territories, [tending] to occupy younger forests only in transit” (Schultz, 284).

Between Yachats, Oregon to the north and Florence, a mere 25 miles, two seaside wilderness areas, two state parks and a state wayside sport “steep ridges” with “nine foot diameter spruces,” Western red cedars and Douglas firs; “a thick understory of ferns and salal;” a unique old growth Sitka spruce forest, Pacific salmon-bearing streams and nesting habitat for the endangered seabird the marbled murrelet, which nests only in old growth forests and feeds in the sea (Chasan and Thompson, 159). Tall native evergreen rhododendrons with their large, varied pink bouquets grow in this region of coastal forest. Within a Port-Orford cedar wetland, *darlingtonia*—the fork-leafed, yellow to purplish green insectivorous cobra lily—thrives under state protection nearby. Chasan and Thompson in their Smithsonian guide to the Pacific Northwest also mention the forty mile expanse of the Oregon Dunes National Recreation Area just south of Florence. Beach grass, spruce thickets and dunes ranging to five hundred feet above sea level are primary features (Chasan and Thompson, 160). The dunes constantly shift in the winds, forming deflation plain wetland basins in the process that collect water, though itinerant at best. The authors note that author Frank Herbert claimed to learn about ecology on these dunes. Over 400 species of wildlife have been found to inhabit the apparently monocultural habitat, which has been under constant threat since the popularization of off-road vehicle use (Chasan and Thompson, 161). Though motor vehicles were written into the novel, the question of how deeply motor vehicles had impacted the environment Kesey wrote from offers substantial imaginative possibilities. The big machines in the novel are the logging machines, including a scant mention of logging trucks on unpaved logging roads, though motorcycles, trucks and cars

are mentioned as well. Carpooling occurs frequently in the novel; not everyone owns a vehicle or goes joyriding in the wild. The reader enters a world where vehicles appear far less ubiquitous than today, tire tracks much harder to find in natural areas, and off-road vehicles—aside from the occasional dune buggy or war surplus jeep—were yet to become a popular consumer item.

Twenty-five conifer and twelve hardwood species populate the Pacific Northwest, where “abundance and biomass of conifers in the Oregon Cascades and Coast Range are one thousand times that of the hardwoods” (Schultz, 253). Schultz locates the Sitka spruce zone adjacent to the coast, while the Western hemlock zone lies further inland and at the base of the west slope of the Cascades. The Sitka spruce zone is characterized by “heavy winter rains, warm winter temperatures, cool summers and heavy summer fogs” and can stretch inland in river valleys to 15 miles (Schultz, 290). This forest’s community is typically made up of Sitka spruce, Western hemlock, red cedar, Douglas fir and red alder. They tend to have “lush understories of shrubs, flowering herbs, ferns, mosses, lichens and liverworts,” with shrubs such as ovalleaf, red huckleberry and rustyleaf; “about half the ground is covered with mosses, liverworts and lichens” (Schultz, 290). Schultz notes that coast pine commonly occurs on unfavorable sites and coexists with an understory of salal, Pacific rhododendron, evergreen huckleberry and the like. The pine however needs poor, sandy soils and sparse canopy. Remarkably, in a forest zone with so much real biodiverse potential, young Hank’s berry thicket—where he finds the bobcat kittens—is surrounded by pines, the only tree to make an appearance in the vignette.

Johnson and O’Neil characterize riparian zones like the one in which Kesey constructed young Hank’s berry thicket as “hotspots” of biological diversity (362). They add that riparian zones are “functionally edge habitats, offering mammals that use these areas access to two or more habitats in close proximity” (Johnson, O’Neil, 375). Hank explores a berry thicket “so

dense, so woven and tangled that even the bears avoid it;” a place where “the rabbits and raccoons had tunneled an elaborate subway system next to the ground,” where frequently he “came face to face with a fellow explorer, an old boar coon” (Kesey, 101). As many as 95 of the 147 known mammalian species in the southwest Oregon region use riparian areas, which could include shrews, moles, myotis-es, a number of rabbit species, chipmunks, ground squirrels, gophers, pocket mice, kangaroo rats, woodrats, a large array of vole species, porcupine, foxes, skunks, badgers and wolverines along with young Hank’s raccoon and bobcats (Johnson, O’Neil, 16-19, 376). A number of these of course would be nocturnal.

Streams and rivers in the spruce zone, according to Schultz’s natural history, commonly host red alder, with grass, herbs, common velvetgrass, common chickweed, foxglove, Western springbeauty, trailing blackberry, and great hedge nettle composing the understory (293). Numerous ferns and salmonberry form a more mature understory. Schultz adds; “Large rivers (e.g., on the Southern Oregon Coast) often are lined with a dense mixture of hardwoods, typically bigleaf maple, red alder, Oregon ash, willows, sometimes black cottonwood” (293). Maximum diameters of old-growth woods included 21 feet for Western redcedar near its 1200-plus year lifespan, 17.5 feet for a 750-plus year Sitka spruce, 16.7 feet for a 2200 year old coast redwood, 14.5 feet for a 1200 year old Douglas fir: “typical diameters are a little less than half these values” and “the largest young growth trees reach only 2-3 feet in diameter” (Schultz, 261). Clearly, some enormous trees once existed in the region around Florence.

Strikingly, Kesey had a very rich, diverse environment from which to draw. The strident berry thicket and surrounding early succession pine forest in the novel bear little relation to the common and expected diverse plant varieties suggested by several natural histories of the region. Of especial interest is the possibility that clearcutting had occurred to such an extent already in

the novel around the Stamper home that such an impoverished landscape could easily be read as ‘naturalized’ except to the close environmental reader. Needless to say, since logging had occurred, especially in areas most convenient to rivers and coasts as early as the mid- to late-1800’s in Oregon—and the Stamper mill lay upriver from home—second growth forests and early succession growth would have been a likely artistic choice. But the austerity, the Spartan nature with which Kesey paints the berry thicket may better serve Hank—who recalls the bobcat vignette by way of recounting a 1961 meeting with local union boss Floyd Evenwrite, a recollection occurring sometime after the central time span of the novel—in another way. This austere recollection may serve to enhance the myth-making nature of the event, the legend of Hank’s attainment of dominant status, thieving bobcat kittens from a seemingly impenetrable, viciously thorny berry thicket. I’ll elaborate on this theory in a later essay.

Eugene N. Kozloff notes in *Plants of Western Oregon, Washington and British Columbia* that the common, naturally occurring trees, shrubs and plants in naturally vegetated parts of the Willamette Valley are similar to those at low lying elevations in the Coastal Range as well as along the western slope of the Cascades (31). Hence, Kesey was probably surrounded by similar plant communities throughout his childhood as well as his stint in Florence. Clearcutting, in addition to complete removal and slash burning, usually involves spraying of herbicides and pesticides, replanting of desired species, and periodic thinning: in short, ‘managed’ and generally poorer habitats, nutrients and biotic diversity even than natural young growth (Schultz, 257). Herbicides and pesticides may or may not have been ubiquitous in the Oregon timber industry by the 1950’s, though the advent of Weyerhaeuser’s tree farm by the late 1940’s suggests the use of such modern products were already in place. While the Olympic National Forest had nearly 200,000 acres of 300-plus year old forest as of 1986, the Siuslaw National

Forest had less than 15,000 acres older than 185 years (Schultz, 333-335). The Siuslaw National Forest brackets the Siuslaw river inland beyond Mapleton, the brunt of the forest running north from Florence along the Coastal Range almost to the Newport-Corvallis west-east corridor. The forest according to Schultz' data held 80,000 acres apiece of uneven growth—aged 100 years or older, 65, 85 and 105 years old—at the time of his writing (333-335). The backstory is, in 1920, 1900 and 1880, significant replanting or natural reforestation of some kind occurred. Clearcuts promote heavy erosion, soil instability, high nutrient loss, air pollution (from slash burning) and increased water runoff volume, while long term impacts include stunted growth of successive trees (Schultz, 336-337). Already we begin to imagine Kesey's wild as a smaller, less colorful wild than the sublime myth of the American Pacific Northwest. At the same time, the fateful flood that claims the lives of young Hank's caged bobcats may well have been more than a little man-made, as clearcuts, access roads—and the novel's own style of sliding large trees down steep embankments to get them to the river—would have favored deep erosion and accelerated runoff circumstances, especially in extended heavy downpours or during the rainy season when the ground would become supersaturated.

Schultz characterizes clearcut regions in the hemlock zone typically reseeding with windborne weedy plants including woodland groundsel, fireweed, bull thistle, and bracken fern, accompanying vine maple, trailing blackberry, Oregon grape, willows and snowbrush (260). He indicates that early succession moist to wet areas nearly always contain red alder, salmonberry and sword fern in seral or medial succession areas, along with vine maple and thick-leaved lotus. Medium-wet seral communities—an intermediate succession stage on the way to climax—typically host “dense tangles of huckleberry (red and green), salmonberry and salal” (Schultz, 260). Kesey's dense berry thicket comes closer to this actual possibility, though clearly—

whether to enhance the focus on young Hank's bravery and determination or merely to simplify the sequence—Kesey's version is far more elemental.

Salal is known for reddish purple berries; salmonberry hosts showy, red, five-petaled blooms; salmonberry thickets are common in moist habitats, and trailing blackberry, in addition to being a deciduous vine, also presents the berries of its namesake (Kozloff, 319). Lewis J. Clark's *Wild Flowers of the Forest and Woodland in the Pacific Northwest* lists salal as familiar in coniferous forests and thickets, 1-3' high, occasionally taller, with edible blue-black fruit (79). Kozloff characterizes the thick-leaved lotus with as many as 23 leaflets per frond-like leaf, sporting long pod-like fruits and greenish to red or purplish red flowers (220).

Kesey writes in rich ecological detail of the sloughs along rivers in southwest Oregon, and in his own version of a general natural history refers to "two-story-high berry thickets" (100). Young Hank's berry thicket, his playscape, rises up as "a wall of thorns that appears totally impenetrable...a snarl...fifteen feet of blackberry vines...brambles" (Kesey, 101-103). Fifteen feet? Or two stories tall? Clearly there's more than one story going on here. The *Handbook of Western Plants* lists wild blackberry as a plant with "trailing or climbing prickly stems 1-8 meter (3.3-26 feet) long...common [and] *particularly abundant in burned or logged off areas* [my italics]...our only native blackberry... excellent flavor" (Gilkey, Dennis, 220). The handbook lists salal as a creeping to erect shrub in moist to drier areas (304). Rubus spectabilis or salmonberry is characterized by prickly stems, up to 16' tall, and common along streams (Gilkey, Dennis, 220). Red elderberry, huckleberry and red huckleberry are considered "rather common from the coast to the west slope of the Cascades" (Gilkey, Dennis, 312-13). Vine maple shrubs too can grow to 26' tall, with 1 ½ to 4 ½ inch leaves along shaded streams, though more common at higher altitudes (Gilkey, Dennis, 258). Franklin and Dyrness' *Natural Vegetation of*

*Oregon and Washington* says “early successional trends following fire or logging” in the more temperate zones tend to feature “dense shrub communities dominated by *Rubus spectabilis*” (61). While blackberry thickets certainly aren’t unfamiliar in the region, the presence of other common species of berry thicket gives the reader pause to wonder, why blackberry? Certainly in terms of the American consciousness blackberries would carry more sensual and memorable experiences. Franklin and Dyrness go on to characterize common seral communities along the Oregon coast as composed of primarily salal-red huckleberry, salmonberry-swordfern, or vine maple-swordfern. Poison oak, brooms, gorse, foxglove, and oxeye daisy, as well as field mustard and poison hemlock are typical invasive species. Old, dense forests often harbor western sword fern, redwood-sorrel, fairy bells, violets, yerba de selva, wild ginger, Pacific starflower and various saxifrages (Munz, 21). A number of other plants were mentioned throughout these various literatures.

The point of this exhaustive—though far from complete—account of environmental possibilities in the Pacific Northwest region around Florence and Springfield, Oregon is not to waltz through the vignette or the rest of Kesey’s text with a Sierra Club style flora and fauna checklist. Neither is it to certify whether Kesey ‘got it right,’ neatly overlaid in naturalistic or realistic ways the nature and culture and history he was addressing. We should be far more interested in the triangulation we can get from text, natural and cultural history, and the reader. The text opens up a subject position for the reader that need not end with the text. Rather, the text may serve as the jumping off point, the door through which worlds open, worlds past, present, future, political, ideological, multi-valent; always in a state of flux, always changed in some way however small by the perceiver. Perhaps familiarity with natural history is a poor second to groundtruthing, but a sign nonetheless pointing the way. Perhaps it’s a set of signs,



however abstract, however merely suggestive of a possible extant reality—however different actual reality may be—worth the effort of familiarity.

Certainly, the fact that Hank as an adult is telling the bobcat story sometime after the fatal year of the novel, long after his childhood experience, suggests that there is perhaps both conscious intent as well as unconscious content. After all, who crawls day after day into a thorny berry thicket, only to bring out three bobcats at risk of life and limb, if not a triumphantly dominant human? The story unfolds while telling about the conflict regarding Stamper resistance to the union party line. Hank, going to hear local union boss Floyd Evenwrite talk about “this Closed Shop business” sinks his boat, losing a brand new motor, another symbol of loss like the bobcat kittens (Kesey, 100). Hank exhibits weak grief: “My pants dried; it got warmer; I pulled on my motorcycle shades so’s he couldn’t see if I dropped off during his talk; and I leaned back and sulked about the boat and motor” (101). And he recounts the bobcat vignette. Halcyon days out in wild, mysterious nature, that peak in childish conquest, and foul out in ‘crummy’ grief, in rage masking despair. Despair at the loss perhaps of things even much greater than the bobcats, that become close as kin. His ‘dropping off’ suggests checking out, unconscious grieving motivated by more than Evenwrite’s bloviated speechification. Grief will be addressed in much more depth later in this work. Suffice it to say that anyone recollecting childhood memories in twentieth century U.S.A. cannot but recollect things natural—as well as cultural—that are forever lost or changed.

Readers can no longer take for granted the environments that authors construct or represent. Environmentality spills off the page in every direction, beckoning the reader to know more intimately the lay of the land and inevitable changes, for aesthetic benefit as well as to recognize what in the process of building modern civilization has been lost in the more than

human world. Environmentality returns to a literal context surrounding the author's expression on the page. Back to a real environment with a dynamic natural past and anthropocentrically altered succession. The author's inhabited environment throughout her life constructs and limits from experience and perceptive habituation—as well as sociocultural reinforcement—the environmental imagination as well as perceptive preferences: what to leave in, what to leave out. Hank's recollection of the bobcat vignette in tandem with the 'closed shop' sequence all told from a point of view much later than the novel, suggests that Kesey's intention may be as convoluted and brilliant as ever.

All of this environmentality and contextualization exists before theoretical and abstract—if vital—considerations of representation, social construction and textuality become paramount. Far from suggesting we limit our studies to the course I have taken here, I argue we need a much greater volume of literature built on these kinds of exploration. We have yet to see a sufficient number of texts of all kinds probed for their contextual environmentality: the ecological, environmental circumstances that gave rise to the author's imagination, as well as the more expansive ways we can engage the natural world about which we are reading. My hope is that you the reader/author will see value in such a task, incorporate it into future holistic thinking about literary texts of all kinds, and foster similar—if not better—kinds of ecological perception. In "Revaluing Nature: Towards an Ecological Criticism," Glen Love roots the new pastoralism in place. The new pastoral centers in a growing awareness of the interconnectedness between the human and non-human world. Ecology is nothing if not about this relationship. And if Kesey's stories in *Sometimes* hold anything in the way of nature, "These stories have trees in them" (Love, 225).

## THE KID AND THE BOBCAT KITTENS

*—courage seems to me humanity's whole prehistory. He robbed the wildest, most courageous animals of all their virtues: only thus did he become—human. This courage... it seems to me, today is called—<sup>12</sup>*

—Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*

Outside the bobcat vignette, Kesey frequently offers a lush, richer, more verdant non-built environment. Young Hank's adventure seemingly encounters only a very elemental landscape, a berry thicket "two stories tall" that becomes "fifteen feet of blackberry vines," a "soft swish of rain through the pines" at the thicket's edge (Kesey, 102, 103). While other readings are encouraged, one take on the early succession berry thicket under the pines sees in the representation a form of logging pastoral. A marginal space located in a historically clearcut space, between the ravaging flow of the river and mature reforested uplands; the town of Wakonda and upstream feral wilds. A space that, in the course of Hank's ventures, recollections and dreams, becomes a meaningful if portentous place. Such a triangulation is not the only possible interpretation. Yet Aldo Leopold's "Round River" essay makes especial note of an old growth clear cut that lost apparently forever the microbial soil nutrients necessary for its return, a point SueEllen Campbell emphasizes in "The Land and Language of Desire" (Leopold, 190-191). In terms of the loss of old-growth Pacific coast forest, Kesey's setting emphasizes too a loss that won't be regained. Kesey seems almost virtuoso in placing young Hank's vignette of love and loss in the wild in a place that can echo such loss, when in the 1950's few seemed to know or care about the loss of old growth forest. In the final essay I'll offer evidence that this

loss was already noticed and felt—in the novel as well as the historical record—however ignored. Ahead of that, I’ll expound on the story of this thicket—so barren of other vegetation in a region suggesting much greater understory lushness—and how it plays into the creation of Hank’s dominant reputation. This essay concerns the human-nature connection and its nature.

From what appears to be an omniscient third person narrator, a voice-over as it were, we learn that the berry thicket has been one of young Hank’s regular, frequent haunts: “by pulling on a hooded oilskin poncho to protect his hide from the thorns, he was able to half crawl, half worm his way through that snarl of vines” (Kesey, 101). Sociobiologist E.O. Wilson once offered an expansive if slick definition of biophilia: “the rich, natural pleasure that comes from being surrounded by living organisms, not just other human beings but a diversity of plants and animals” (“Biophilia,” SM 31). Wilson’s *Biophilia* (1984) posits with restraint: “the innate tendency to focus on life and lifelike processes” (1). As underlying evidence of biophilia, Wilson argues: “People react more quickly and fully to organisms than to machines. They will walk into nature, to explore, hunt and garden, if given the chance. They prefer entities that are complicated, growing and sufficiently unpredictable to be interesting” (*Biophilia*, 116).

Richard Louv in *Last Child in the Woods* (2006) asserts: “The way children understand and experience nature has changed radically...kids are aware of the global threats to the environment—but their physical contact, their intimacy with nature, is fading” (1). Louv attacks postmodernism’s tendency to posit reality as a construct for the way it impoverishes human experience. Senses narrow, physiologically and psychologically. Louv advocates for direct experience as I do. How might the reader imagine what Hank’s direct experience may have been? The bobcat vignette reproduces a memory that operates succinctly like Kenneth Burke’s conceptual terministic screen; reflecting, selecting and deflecting reality. As I will later show, the

vignette's narrative structure, too, deeply troubles a stable, confident belief in communicated experience. Deep ecology advocates immersion in experience and perception beyond or before words. A regular trope treats communicated experience—reflected, selected and deflected by linguistic rendering—as a set of mere signposts pointing the way.

An anonymous, quasi-authorial, sympathetic voice rhapsodically enriches Hank's dawning recollection of his deep, non-human environed, childhood experience: "When the spring sun was bright above the thicket, enough light filtered down through the leaves so he was able to see, and he would spend hours on his hands and knees exploring the smooth passageways" (Kese, 101). There is an unmistakable softness and camaraderie to this moment where he frequently meets an old raccoon. We should be so lucky to carry such an experience into adulthood. Central to Louv's argument is mounting research that ties mental, physical and spiritual health to our relationship with the more than human world. Studies suggest that nature exposure can reduce Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and improve "children's cognitive abilities and resistance to negative stresses and depression" (Louv, 35). Reciprocally, Louv acknowledges the impact of the child's relationship with nature on adult care of the earth, extending that care through urgently needed values to their children. Ecocritical theorist SueEllen Campbell too has recognized experientially the value and necessity of early positive experiences in non-built, animated environments. In "The Land and Language of Desire," she comments philosophically: "How close we are to the land as we are growing up and when we are grown, how we learn to see our relationship to it—these things must matter enormously" (134). And of course, research now shows they do.

Young Hank found the bobcat kittens "at the end of a strange new passageway, three kittens with their blue-gray eyes but a few days open, peering up at him from a mossy, hair-lined

nest... they looked much the same as barn kittens that Henry drowned by the sackful every summer” (Keseey, 102). But Hank doesn’t have the same reaction to the kittens that his father might, not by a longshot. The direct experience of nature in childhood for Louv has the potential to cultivate a “deeper understanding of [our] fellow creatures” (14). In return, pet and horticultural therapies have become accepted health care approaches, of especial benefit for the young and old. Yet Elaine Brooks, former Scripps Institution of Oceanography biologist and oceanographer, counters; “Biologically we have not changed. We are still programmed to fight or flee large animals” (Louv, 43). While some neuropsychological research links surprise, alien faces, and perceived threat to fear responses, socially conditioned fight or flight programming deserves far more attention. How deeply are we impacted by those we look up to who model and react with fear—and moralities—to animal encounters? How early and unchangeably does that conditioning become socialized in family, community and culture?

Cornell environmental psychologists Nancy Wells and Gary Evans found that “nature in or around the home appears to be a significant factor in protecting the psychological wellbeing of children in rural areas” (Louv, 50). Self esteem measures tend to show marked improvement—key to a dominant personality like Hank’s—perhaps because of the confidence, the self assurance encouraged by exploring and engaging the natural, if human impacted world. Professor of Psychology Peter H. Kahn in *The Human Relationship with Nature* identifies over one hundred studies confirming a main benefit of time spent in nature: stress reduction (Louv, 50). Though little has been done to research the impacts of domination on stress, anecdotally most of us will likely recognize an undeniable link.<sup>13</sup>

Howard Gardner, best known for his theory of multiple intelligences, expanded his original seven intelligences to include a natural intelligence, “the human ability to recognize

plants, animals and other parts of the natural environment” (Louv, 72). A key part of this intelligence’s advanced capability includes keen sensory skills, especially attention. Louv sees this intelligence turning up often in nature writing and personal narratives such as those of environmental activists. A number of studies suggest that social behavior, creativity and quality of play for children are more positively affected by natural as opposed to constructed playscapes. Such a finding has obvious environmental justice ramifications for inner city urban poor and minority kids with little or no access to expansive, relatively native earthscapes.<sup>14</sup> While perhaps most of us are not environed—let alone emotionally equipped—to take on young Hank’s experience, taking the bobcat kittens home and making them his own, Louv’s work suggests the power and necessity of rich experiences for children with the more than human world.

While Louv could find no relevant research on attachment theory and nature, at least one attachment theory psychologist found the question of considerable interest. Young Hank quite cavalierly takes the first kitten. By the time he’s taken the litter he has unconsciously committed himself to a relationship of affiliation on par with pet love that ends in tragic loss. E.O. Wilson argues: “to the degree that we come to understand other organisms, we will place a greater value on them, and on ourselves” (*Biophilia*, 2). He roots attention in “the naturalist’s trance, the hunter’s trance” (*Biophilia*, 7), which may perceive the more elusive. Young Hank may not hunt with a gun, but his natural attention and eye for remote exploration lead him to a most elusive find.

In “The Porous World” Gary Snyder discusses the deep ecological practice of crawling; “Not hiking or sauntering or strolling, but crawling, steadily and determined, through the woods” (263). Key to this practice is the idea that “late-twentieth-century mid-elevation Sierra forests” are always “regenerating from fire or logging” (Snyder, 263). This way of experiencing wild or

feral parts of the forest is determined by the environment: “no way to travel but to dive in: down on your hands and knees” (Snyder, 263). Like young Hank pulling on his oilskin poncho, Snyder too has his crawling strategy; “belly sliding on snow and leaves like an otter—you get limber at it” (263). Exploration leads him to a predator’s trace as well; a bear’s trace. He concludes; “To go where bears, deer, raccoons, foxes—all our other neighbors—go, you have to be willing to crawl” (Snyder, 264). For Snyder, this act seeks to overcome “hominid pride,” while finding “the contours and creatures of the pathless heart of the woods” (264). Crawling is an act of enjoining with community, of communing. Snyder says; “there is the whole world of little animal trails that have their own logic” (264), and perhaps following another’s logic is what counts most in participating in community with others, whether for Snyder, young Hank—or ourselves. Synesthesia becomes prevalent; the “feel” of dew from a young fir on one’s face, the “delicate aroma” of the rich earth and fungi. For Snyder, this way of communing with the natural environment is made more salient by the loss of greater wild spaces: “As wide open spaces shrink around us, maybe we need to discover the close-up charms of the brushlands, and their little spiders, snakes, ticks...” (264) and the paratactic list goes on. Through Snyder, young Hank’s strident berry thicket becomes the grail of postmodern nature, a place to love and commune though unable to dispel human caused change. The act of crawling prefaces living whether merely as a visitor—or as an inhabitant. Snyder admonishes; “find your body at home on the ground” (264).

Elaborating on Ed Reed’s *The Necessity of Experience*, Louv argues that modern culture has tunneled the senses, producing feelings of isolation and confinement as well as reduction of experiences such as physical risk, a condition Louv terms “cultural autism” (64). Young Hank’s experience on the other hand offers a model of physical contact and intimacy that can be



identified and articulated elsewhere in American literature for the purposes of characterizing and critiquing modes of childhood and adult experience in predominantly more than human earthscapes. On the other hand, as we move to discuss young Hank's emotions and choice in taking the bobcat kittens, we might recognize a sense of foreboding that dates back to Emerson's poem "Each and All." Emerson's psalm to synesthetic experience requites the object when in its organically occurring place, speaking to the necessity of ecological experience.<sup>15</sup>

Hank's own voice interrupts an apparent straightforward third person telling of capture: "He picked up the nearest kitten and began to fight and tear at the vine until he made a space large enough to turn around in...he took the scruff of its neck between his teeth..." "Beat it out," [Hank said to himself,] "beat it!" (Keseey, 102). *Lynx rufus*—the bobcat—is known virtually across the United States into Canada and Mexico, save for where they have been exterminated in the Great Lakes region, the upper Ohio and Mississippi valleys (Larivière and Walton, 3). Adults have pointed ears, long legs, grey or reddish fur, brown or black spots and a bobbed, banded tail (Ingles, 388f, 391). They grow to about twice the size of a domestic cat, having originated in Africa. Ancestral fossil records in Oregon date back to the Pleistocene era, while earliest remains in the U.S. date back two million years, in Texas (Verts and Carraway, 450, 458). Verts and Carraway assert; "Overall [the bobcat] tends to be found more commonly in early successional stages where the understory is dense and prey abundance greatest" (458). Lagomorphs—typically rabbits—are their main diet, though Ingles has noted that a number of small mammals have been identified in stomach content records, suggesting that bobcats provide the ecological service of policing diseased rodents. Capable of pulling down small deer and occasionally taking quail, their threat to hunter's game remains exceedingly small (Ingles, 391-392). Key threats to bobcats—from humans—before the 1970's included pellets used to poison meat for coyote and

“vermin” drives (Ingles, 393). Though rarely hunted in Canada and the U.S. for their pelts before 1970, by the early 1980’s their pelts were fetching up to \$142 dollars in Canada. Larrison notes that “a pack of hounds...can often tree a cat and this is the common mode of culture in many places,” adding “Bobcats make interesting pets and several of the author’s friends have successfully raised them” (188). Verts and Carraway, reminding readers that “for most of us, the first words we spoke were names of mammals” (6), found “young of the year do not seem capable of shifting to alternate prey when lagomorph populations crash” (460); one report found “no young surviving to Autumn in a year when lagomorph populations crashed” (462). Raised by the female, males have no parental role (Larrison, 3).

This last detail is all the more curious when recalling that Hank and the Stamper brood become themselves when raised by men. Only Leland, portrayed as weak and effeminate, is raised primarily by a woman, which fits the dominant stereotypical western American male myth. He comes into his own as a man only when returning home, entering into a rite of passage that initiates him fully into a world of domination.

Bobcats tend to have acute senses of sight and hearing and “feel” through their whiskers (Maser, 355). Maser adds they are active mainly at night, are rarely seen, and occur most commonly in “brushy areas, where they often travel along old logging roads” (354-355). Strikingly, the natural history of bobcats for Maser is inseparable from a modern, human-altered landscape. He notes they are known for excellent balance, are quick, active and lithe, and spend much of their time sitting, watching and listening (Maser, 355-356). A “fear of humans and dogs may cause them to abandon their young without apparent willingness to fight,” and “when the kittens are old enough to follow their mothers, at least some mothers display hostility if their kittens are threatened by people” (Maser, 357).

Kevin Hansen in *Bobcat: Master of Survival* (2007) claims;

When transporting particularly young kittens, the mother picks the youngster up by the scruff of the neck, to which it responds by remaining limp and passive until it is set down again. This behavior is common in all cats, and appears again in a variation [during mating]... The male...straddles the female and grips the back of her neck in its teeth. This has a calming effect on the female—similar to the carrying reflex in kittens (52, 60).

Greg Garrard, writing on the trope ‘animals,’ begins by characterizing animal-human relations in the humanities as split between philosophical consideration of animal rights and cultural analysis of representation (136). Quoting animal rights ethicist Peter Singer, Garrard says: “The boundary between human and animal is arbitrary and moreover irrelevant, since we share with animals a capacity for suffering that only “the hand of tyranny” could ignore” (137). Singer argued that the suffering of a human should not count for more than the suffering of an animal, as in the utilitarian ethical tradition, but we should be quick to notice that Hank’s treatment of the kitten is not harmful; rather, his behavior is nurturing, if also self serving. When Hank “found he was being slowed by the hissing and snapping kitten in his hands...he took the scruff of its neck between his teeth. The kitten became immediately calm and swung placidly from the boy’s mouth as Hank sped through the blackberries” (Kesey, 102).

In discussing Masson and McCarthy’s *Why Elephants Weep: The Emotional Lives of Animals* (1996), Garrard zeroes in on researchers’ rejection of human descriptive language: a monkey is not ‘angry’, it ‘exhibits aggression’; a crane doesn’t ‘feel affection’, it displays courtship or parental behavior (138). Garrard notes that research is convincing for animals showing a range of emotions, while more complex emotions such as compassion or shame seem less convincing. But how do we characterize the behavior of a dog that has been overly scolded or beaten, and displays affect through facial expressions, as well as cowering to the effect? If dogs don’t feel shame, how do we characterize their response to shaming and physical discipline,

forms of human domination?

Paul Shepard, writing on “Fellow Creatures” in *Man in the Landscape* (1967), considers Albert Schweitzer’s thinking around a reverence for life. Schweitzer was deeply affected by Descartes’ notion that animals were no more than machines. In his attention to Schweitzer’s moral argument, Shepard notes that Schweitzer left it to the individual to decide when one animal’s life or wellbeing could be sacrificed for another’s. Shepard observed; “The natural dangers which threaten most wild animals many times a day do not disturb them for long and they quickly return to resting and feeding” (192). Descartes, he added, believed that only man, with a soul, could feel pain. Dialectically Shepard discusses how Charles Jay’s *The Animal World of Albert Schweitzer* revealed “almost a fixation, for certain formal relationships to animals...hunting, control, eating, and the destruction of wild [and threatening] animals” (193), as opposed to Schweitzer’s ‘reverence for life’ ethic. Shepard chastises Schweitzer for dealing with leopards solely as “blood lust killers” and for showing “a conspicuous lack of interest in...animals themselves” (194). In exploring the mythopoeisis of animals in European folk tales and myths, Shepard notes that judgment trumped observation: “The predator is occasionally admired for his cunning, but in the end he is sunk in the stream or burned in the kettle” (196). Europeans drew a false parallel between predators and war, “based on the mutual factors of aggression, mortality, and injury to man and his domestic community” (Shepard, 196). Contrarily, Shepard addresses preservation as a means of establishing equality for the more than human world—a right as well as a mutual necessity for survival. We see this in the ecological services that bobcats provide. If Kesey had depicted a rabbit-scarce year, then young Hank’s gesture would have signified rescue, however shortlived. Shepard notes: “the individual is incomplete when abstracted from its environment, and will not survive the destruction of its

habitat...In the long view, there is no way to protect the individual organism than to preserve its natural habitat” (204-205). Shepard’s argument swings both ways, and gives greater tooth to Wallace Stegner’s argument for preservation of so called wilderness—the least human impacted realm.

When Hank takes the kitten between his teeth by the scruff of its neck, he seems to react with a ‘natural’ instinct. In utilitarian fashion, he leaves his hands free to circumambulate the thorny tunnel with the kitten in his mouth. But the kitten reacts the way it would as if it were being held by its own mother, which in the short run bodes well for the kitten. There’s an intuition here that plays in Hank’s favor, perhaps lore buried in his subconscious from watching the kittens in the barn or hearing older, more experienced kinfolk talk about the ways animals treat their young. Woe to Hank if he’d found out otherwise the hard way. The narrative pairs human and animal instinct in a nested, associative way suggestive of Neal Evernden’s terms of inter-influence and inter-subjectivity in his essay “Beyond Ecology: Self, Place and the Pathetic Fallacy.” Mimicry is implied, an ecomorphism. Neil Leach, in addressing the role of the environment in the formation of identity in children—through a dialectic reading of Roger Callois’ work on mimicry and Jacques Lacan’s work on the mirror stage—points to “an overwhelming tendency to imitate” (32). Anecdotally, most of us recognize a tendency especially in younger children to imitate. Leach argues that between the fear of complete assimilation into an environment (such as a social environment)—of losing one’s self—and the fear of alienation in the recognition of our separateness, identity is formed. His argument articulates the seemingly inherent need for humans to see themselves as separate from—while constantly drawn to and identifying with—the more than human world.

What I find most intriguing in young Hank’s behavior is the symbolism of the maternal,

nurturing instinct; compelling a sense of wellbeing in each kitten after taking them on as a responsibility. This possible motive becomes amplified when he fetches the other two kittens, responding to the first kitten's forlorn wail: "a cry so tragic, so pleading, so frightened and forlorn, that the boy winced with sympathy. "Hey, you lonely, ain't you? Huh, ain't you?" The kitten's yowled answer threw the boy into an intense conflict" (Kesey, 102). But nurturing is constellated with the effeminate, especially in mid-twentieth century western American rural culture where feminine ascribed behaviors typically are rigidly paired with essentialized female behaviors. On the other hand, Hank may have merely mimicked the way his elders treated especially newborn livestock and hunting hounds, which are prized elsewhere in the novel. Regardless, he's not treating the kitten the way that humans in the novel treat other humans, or for that matter the way his father treats barn kittens. Rather, a certain sensitivity arises in young Hank that defies our expectations, defying his own society's interpellations of a strong, independent, desensitized male.

When Hank calls; "Hey you. Hey there you, Bobby the cat," I hear the voice of affection. In this very private, unconscious moment, young Hank doesn't react with the stern, callous voice of the dominant patriarchal males in his family. He reacts with an utterly foreign expression suggestive of the nurturing aspects of the natural environment, yet to be socialized out of him, ahead of his role as a dominant male. What I find most fascinating about Hank's responsive emotion of sympathy—and the actions it precipitates against other feelings and reason which I explore below—is that it occurs in an ecological context. Arguably, young Hank's strongest impulse is driven by the ego gratification he has learned will come to those who triumphantly steal and bring back to their tribe the prized young of a dangerous predator; a notion of bravado, courage and daring similar to the Plains Indians notion of counting coup. But

taking the kitten, a living being, also entails a reconfiguration of responsibilities and concerns along ecological lines. Self interest is subsumed by interest in the welfare of others. A protective, considerate emotion emerges, and it emerges when Hank is alone in nature.

The logic would perhaps fail in human social relations, especially where boys and men in traditional stereotypical social dynamics reject sensitizing emotions as effeminate and enforce this expectation with dominance, only to find they turn up in passions for one's hunting dog, horse, truck, or favorite rifle. And while historic philosophical and scientific thinking rejected emotion as base and animalistic, and critics such as Val Plumwood have argued that emotion in dominant male stereotypes has historically been constructed 'female,' here we see rationale working alongside emotions in a symbiotic, synergistic way. The story alludes to this pairing associatively. In Hank's instinctive reaction to leave the same way he came he exercises a sort of "reasoning, without even consciously thinking about it," when attempting to steer clear of the mother bobcat—should she return—during his escape (Kesey, 102). Certainly young Hank's initiating motives are highly instrumental, and I shall address those concerns more deeply in the following essay. But ecological entanglement leads to responses that are on the one hand nurturing: life and health supporting, caring; and on the other, instinctual and intuitive in terms of life preservation skills. Hank's instincts lead him into flight, which while protective, defies the bravado of the traditional western American male archetype, which is irresistibly interpellated into fistfighting later in the novel.

Philosopher and author Jack Turner, who has among other things explored aspects of male consciousness and experience that don't fit neatly into traditional western American male stereotypes in his book *The Abstract Wild*, considers Doug Peacock's encounter with a grizzly. After quoting Peacock's poignant recollection from *Grizzly Years* at length, immersing the

reader in Peacock's own voice of the experience, Turner triangulates Peacock's choice of restraint, gun in hand, confronted by a face of terror, with William Faulkner's short story "The Bear." Turner says: "The not killing opens his heart and, as Faulkner suggests, gives him access to the wild realm" (101). Kesey's hunting scenes seem to have more than a little of "The Bear" in them. Turner argues that "predators are perhaps our most accessible experience of the wild" (85). Elsewhere Turner recounts numerous personal experiences, in highly remote and relatively untouched landscapes such as the Grand Tetons, the greater Yellowstone ecosystem, and the Jim Bridger wilderness, all near his home. He describes even trace encounters with predators as intimate, carnal experiences "marked by gross alterations in attention, perception, body language, body chemistry and emotion" (Turner, 85). Turner describes such events in synesthetic terms: "The wild is keenly sensual...space is close; smell and hearing and touch reassert themselves" (27). When in the essay "Mountain Lion" he recognizes that a big cat has been stalking him near his home, he acknowledges feelings of terror, sadness and fear, feelings that somehow make him whole rather than compelling a reaction to kill, to simply return to blithe feelings engulfing him in safety if sterilizing his environment. In the end he returned to looking for signs of the mountain lion.

Yi-Fu Tuan, the geographer noted for coining and exploring the terms topophilia and topophobia, explores the dark side of affiliation with place in his text *Landscapes of Fear*. In a chapter titled "The Child as Unformed Nature," Tuan explores different cultural views of human and animal nature and the body. Tuan argues; "Being human is a matter of knowing how to behave properly...by these criteria the young of every society are not human; they lack culture" (27). The sense of what is 'proper,' what is expected, carries with it the ring of domination we've been socialized to tune out. Kesey's rendition of Hank could be characterized as what is expected



of the dominant male, from capturing the bobcat kittens to beating up the kids that make fun of him when they die to sleeping with his father's wife and so on. Children Tuan says are perceived as "bodies full of sudden and strong impulses," bodies considered "an ever present division of wild nature...to be tamed" (27). Tuan ties his thought to Rousseau, Romanticism and the 'natural man.' He differentiates between animals and humans on an emotional level: "An animal perhaps knows anger and sadness, but can it be wistful or melancholic? It shows alarm and signs of anxiety, but does it stand in dread of humiliation, of being shamed by its peers?" (Tuan, 5). These emotions, it would seem, are reserved especially for humans. As we shall see in the following essay, Hank's primary conflict in returning for the other two kittens, silencing their "frightened, forlorn" cries, comes in the form of demeaning self talk that could only have been socialized.

Influential ethnographer Clifford Geertz observed in the Balinese people of Indonesia that "babies are not allowed to crawl" out of "revulsion against any behavior that reminds [the people] of the animal state" (Tuan, 28). Other behaviors like eating or defecation were reviled for their animalistic similarities. As Tuan traces the social history of infant ideology, he discusses the practice of swaddling for the purposes of greater docility and less supervision: "The baby was thought to be animal-like and violent and to have a capacity for evil" (29). He notes that 16<sup>th</sup> century children were imprisoned in standing cages on stools in part to keep them from "crawling like animals" (Tuan, 30). Such methods were intended to "discipline the body" and "exterminate the weeds of the mind" (Tuan, 30). Fear too has been used to control children, to make them docile, obedient and filial, Tuan adds. In his introduction, he contrasts the "nervous rabbit" with the confident predator such as big cats, noting a study that showed heavily preyed upon animals tend to sleep poorly (Tuan, 3-10).

Shepard on the other hand suggests that “Creatures who learn from each other socially extend their learned perceptions...from mother to mother nature” (19). In a chapter titled “Sense of Place,” he digresses to eliminate the inside/outside of the human body. Utilizing Alan Watts, he discusses the notion of ego in predators, a notion we can sense in young Hank. From an evolutionary standpoint, Shepard is preoccupied with the environment selecting for monkeys: “genes are not absolute determiners...their final expression depends on what the environment evokes” (xix). Is it possible that in young Hank’s environmentally located response, we are seeing the environment select for sympathy, for inter-species care? Shepard believes that ethics emerge from the delayed development and maturity of primates, asserting a continuum between human and animal.

Noted ethologist and evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins prefaces *The Extended Phenotype* by noting: “The phenotypic effects [observable characteristics or traits] of a gene are the tools by which it levers itself into the next generation, and these tools may ‘extend’ far outside the body in which the gene sits, even reaching deep into the nervous systems of other organisms” (vi). Dawkins utilizes perhaps the most abhorrent logic for describing the apparently altruistic behavior of a foster parent that feeds a cuckoo nestling: the logic of manipulation, the nestling’s manipulation of the foster parent bird. Given that I define manipulation as a conscious, self-serving act that functions to hoodwink, swindle or otherwise cheat a behavior out of someone through unfair advantage and without reciprocation, my distaste for the language of domination it suggests may be transparent. And if we exploit Dawkins’ logic, then we might view the bobcat kitten as more skilled at getting its needs met than young Hank, though by far the larger and more daunting predator. On the other hand, if dominance reacted with callousness and brute reply to helpless calls from hoodwinking, seductive kittens trying to elicit sympathy,

would we be surprised?

Far more profound is Dawkins' idea that actions select, based on environmental demands, evolutionarily sustainable characteristics. Though speculative, we might have to assume that more complex emotions were selected in humans, just as emotions such as fear were selected in humans and other animals, for preservation of the species—and their habitat. Logic suggests that sympathy—such as the sympathy elicited in young Hank by the yowling bobcat kittens, or sympathy for the world we depend on for life, energy, nutrients, resources, our very health and wellbeing—would hypothetically be selected for its preservation and nurturing potentials. Dawkins' discussions of beaver dams and bird songs in terms of extended phenotype may be more approachable, though hardly more significant.

Shepard refers to Edith Cobb's 1959 work "The Ecology of Imagination in Childhood." Cobb, delving into clinical research on imagination in childhood, referred to "the strivings of animal infancy and the storms of adolescence" (Shepard, 34). Tuan's historically charted language concerning the child—and Kesey's portrayal of young Hank in the bobcat vignette—can readily be discerned in the clinical researcher's moving portrayal of youth. Shepard draws on Cobb's view to illuminate the emergence of aesthetic experience through what Cobb calls, in ecologically embedded moments in nature, "moments of form-creating expansion and self consciousness" (34). Through narration of unconscious acts of behavior, the unconscious self is realized. Hank's self consciousness of the bobcat experience emerges in adulthood, years after largely unconscious reactions co-constructed the experience—with the environment. Shepard fondly considers child's play as "at once monkey and cat-like—hiding, stalking and capture" (35). Like Tuan, Shepard visits historic notions of the child, recounting the nineteenth century idea that children recapitulated in stages the evolution of man. He sees parallels between

predators such as the tiger, wolf and human, all of which evince hunting as well as playing behaviors. Shepard asserts Edith Cobb's belief that there is a "principle of expectancy within the animal's "neural tissue" which unites perception and the exploration of the environment as an innate appetite" (36). Shepard follows up with the need to make a world intricately related to a sense of identity. For young Hank, innate emotional impulses in the big thicket emerge from the unconscious. He is not explicitly aware of them, and it takes an external narrator, uncertain as the reader is of whose voice recounts, characterizing the unconscious impulsiveness of these behaviors, to fill us in. Certainly the social coup, when young Hank returns bearing the bloody marks of wrestling the thicket for a blasting cap box of kittens, is the hero's welcome.

Young Hank's apparent animal nature goes far beyond cultural and creative implications after his uncle builds a cage for the kittens by the river. Confinement is for the kittens' sake, to protect from a boisterous pack of trained, bloodthirsty hunting hounds. Hank "spent a large part of that summer in the cage with the three kittens, and by fall they were...accustomed to his morning visit" (Kesey, 105). He socializes with the kittens, nests with them, which again seems highly feminine in character; antithetical to traditional, stereotypical, western American male social logic, which as we'll explore in the following essay would be enforced by domination and coerced conformity. Even more likely, enforced by firm establishment of the dominant's place (outside the cage) as opposed to the dominated's place (within). We don't get a narrative depicting domestication and discipline, but a narrative that suggests Hank has identified with the kittens and has become, to the extent that he can, one of them. E.O. Wilson argues: "we favor certain animals because they fill the superficial role of our surrogate kin" (*Biophilia*, 126). At age ten, Hank's cousin Joe Ben is a regular and frequent companion, but Hank's own mother is distant and will soon die—the only evidence of a relationship of possible sensitivity. The

surrogate kin suggested by young Hank's shared space with the bobcats evokes sensitivity, caring, kinship and perhaps even love that have had no other relationship in which to take root.

And so we should not be surprised at the upwelling of emotion that occurs when Hank finds the kittens dead in a river washout: "He doesn't want to cry; he hasn't allowed himself to cry in years" (Kesey, 108). We can hear in this line the stereotypical western American (and perhaps elsewhere) male panoptic policing of supposedly effeminate (rather than universally healthy) behavior and emotion. We can hear the socialized programming inherent in the unspoken dominant assertion: 'Big boys don't cry.' Hank tries to hide his face, hopes his stern father Henry and cousin Joe Ben won't notice the cats as the three males leave in the boat for school, but they do; and Hank tries to rationalize what happened. "And when I couldn't go on," Hank says, "I went to beating the side of the boat until the old man took me by the fist and stopped me" (Kesey, 109). Grief takes over, another set of emotions traditional stereotypical western American men have been prevented from experiencing, though it's peculiar that the male socialized form of expressing grief—physical violence—is also thwarted in the sequence.

My aim in this essay has been to show how young Hank's interaction with nature unfolds aspects of openness and feminine ways of being that benefit the whole person, his culture and the natural environment; aspects of being that will in large part be socialized out of consciousness by predominantly male social groups of which he is a part. As the scene makes us aware of the outside world, first and foremost in a realistic or naturalistic way, this essay has in some ways explored the question: What kind of self does Nature mirror in the vignette? Following from the idea that art and literature can and whenever necessary should take an activist stance are a number of questions. How does the passage open up meanings and possibilities for understanding ourselves and our environment better? How does the individual and the collective

consciousness of an ecologically evolved and environmentally protective civilization to become more fully aware—and more fully expressed? Underlying this ecocritical exploration lays the idea that psychological health is affected by social domination, both of which in turn largely determine the health and wellbeing of human inhabited and impacted environments.

In portraying an ecological reading, my intent has been to move across disciplinary lines to explore what various discourses might have to say in relation to the experience of childhood and the more than human world which depends with humans on sustainable earthscapes and psychological health and wellbeing. The human race as well as the world in which we are enmeshed suffers deeply from the insidious and historic instilling of ubiquitous, naturalized, socially constructed ‘human’ and ‘manly’ characteristics through social domination. We must choose whether to take traditional moral approaches to narrating historic, unconscious patterns—denying, shaming, and denouncing—or more psychological approaches: attempting to observe and bear witness to historic patterns at least initially without judgment, however inescapable framing and linguistic categorization may be. Leveraging observation with reactive morality will only set up another wave of domination, another wave of demand for conformity to resist, or to fall victim to. Like the old psychological joke that ends with the light bulb that must want to change, our desired social and environmental conditions will remain tenuous at best until externally enforced moralities are replaced by ethics that arise from within.

## THE KID LOSES TO DOMINATION

*Cultural transformation theory proposes that underlying the great surface diversity of human culture are two basic models of society...the dominator model [and] the partnership model. In [the partnership model], diversity is not equated with either inferiority or superiority.<sup>16</sup>*

—Riane Eisler

Dominance-based influences—of behavior, consciousness and identity—are typically masked by traditional exegesis, and are masked as well as in the bobcat vignette. The stereotype of masculinity—the independent ‘cowboy hero,’ the ‘real man,’ and accompanying values of courage, bravery, valor; independent, self made, self sufficient—in the novel as well as in much traditional exegesis of American literature, especially literature of the American West, has been constructed by domination-based logics. In the novel, dominance is handed down through the lineage of family patriarchy, reinforced by local male society and thrust upon an eager to learn and master young Hank. The idiosyncratic model of masculinity in the dominant Hank Stamper is much broader, often taking into consideration other humans and the more than human world rather than dominating. As with the previous essays, I draw on a number of extra-literary resources for the purposes of constructing a rich, more articulate understanding of domination and its interpellation in young Hank, especially as patterns of dominated and dominating thought are revealed in the bobcat vignette.

Chimpanzees, studied throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century by for instance ethologist Jane Goodall and psychologist Abraham Maslow, and well known for their dominance-based social structure, offer a number of useful insights for understanding our own patterns of domination as

well as patterns of domination in the novel. This animal's behaviors are all the more significant, given that humans share nearly 99 percent of our DNA with these ancestral relatives. A common rule of thumb for evolutionary theorists suggests; "if closely related species act the same, the underlying process is probably the same too" (De Waal, 63). As a way of bridging Kesey's writing with more recent work, some nature writing may offer the opportunity to explore where and how dominance-based behaviors may be embedded as well. If young Hank had a chance of cultivating qualities that lay far outside the traditional dominant western American male stereotype suggested by his father and other males in the novel, it was alone in nature or dwelling with the bobcats that he found those qualities.

Traditional exegesis of Kesey's *Sometimes a Great Notion* has centered on—like much of outdated traditional literary criticism—values of character. Barry H. Leeds notes "courage, stoicism and initiative against the forces of nature and collectivism" in the novel (63). These rather idealistic humanistic notions dim in an era where courage, stoicism and initiative have largely been co-opted by high capitalist free market advocates, along with freedom and liberty, for the purposes of manipulating docile and loyal producers and consumers, and leveraging identity to back deregulation resulting in environmental degradation and the rising tsunami of ecological crisis. Stephen L. Tanner, drawing heavily from Kesey's working notes, adds strength, self reliance, and other values embodied in "the mold of the cowboy hero...in [American] western myths" (65). In these values we can hear George W. Bush style domination of both people and the environment, Ronald Reagan style embodiment of trickle-down bootstrap American success that has resulted in rapidly degraded natural environments, neglect and denial of global warming, and the utter disbelief and dismay that has become ubiquitous to jobseekers in the recent global recession. M. Gilbert Porter adds "the validity of human heroism," bravery



and independence (37). Though perhaps coincidental, these critical works released between 1981 and 1983 show no evidence of post-structural or ecocritical thinking. A cursory search of literary databases for critical work on *Sometimes* shows little more.

The “cowboy hero,” as Tanner refers to it, is none other than the traditional western American male archetype: independent, self-reliant, defiant, freedom-loving, self-made and above all else, socially constructed in a very visceral way by domination. While some traditional, dominant western American males may deserve to be the target of race, class and gender aggression, as the latest embodiment of European colonization, imperialism and gender-based domination however unconscious, Hank Stamper is also a victim of domination, a pawn in a much larger coerced and socialized behavioral game, as is his father and his father before him. As post-capitalist philosopher and social thinker André Gorz has said, the dominant suffer “the automated logic of social systems” as well as the dominated, “dominate only insofar as they serve it as loyal functionaries” (4). The first of these essays highlighted kinship-based male domination as illustrated in the novel, as well as social domination coming from the high school kids and other townfolk in Wakonda nearby. These operate as multi-generational driving forces shaping especially Hank and his father Henry’s identities and behaviors in the novel. If anything, Boney Stokes’ use of his father’s rhetoric on Henry (as well as Hank) suggests the manipulative way in which domination uses character in the novel to construct allegiant, docile bodies that become strong capitalist producers, assertively reproducing—through identity and morality—the social megamachine, the automated logic of local and national masculinity and citizenship.

Traditional formulations of character aside, Kesey utilizes a highly ecomimetic style to write the bobcat vignette that undermines the apparent dominant structure of Hank’s character. Two omniscient narrative voices (italicized, unitalicized) are accompanied by three voices of

Hank's; as a ten year old, in his mid-thirties when most of the novel's action takes place and while addressing the reader sometime thereafter. The narrative appears to begin as a straightforward third person telling, but in the course of the full telling of the bobcat vignette, we find it is remembered after an incident in which the adult Hank loses a prized boat and motor. Further complicating the recollection is the idea that it hovers somewhere between remembrance and dream. Without a center to rely upon, the narrative opens up to question and purpose, and a dominant univocal expression is undermined by unconscious narrative and story strategies.

Notice the social programming young Hank evinces upon discovering the bobcat kittens. His first impulse is driven by an instrumental identification made with the kittens: he's "overcome by his remarkable good fortune" (Kesey, 102). Immediately following, we read; "'Suck egg mule,' he whispered reverently, as though such a find needed the awed respect of Uncle Aaron's expressions instead of the forceful punch of Henry's curses" (102). Hank grabs the first kitten and hightails it out of the thicket. In a few short sentences the reader is exposed to three markers of dominance. "Good fortune" is socially constructed, owing to the fact that he anticipates a reward for bringing home a bobcat kitten. He immediately refers to two patriarchal figures in his clan, and rationalizes one's way of being over another, and his adoption of it. We do not see how he's been socialized by the domination of his father Henry, nor do we see directly his resistance to or challenge of it, though his choice of expression and rejection of his father's way imply that challenge. The "forceful punch" suggests those curses have been used on others, and we can only assume if they were used on others, as dominance tends to work, they were probably used to discipline young Hank. Used on him when he didn't measure up, used on him when he was being goaded into performing better, used on him when he didn't behave in a way that managed Henry's stress and cultivated approved identity.

Dominance in primates can be observed in a fairly straightforward fashion. Jane Goodall in her mammoth tome *The Chimpanzees of Gombe: Patterns of Behavior*, based on a quarter century of observing chimps in their native habitat, notes that an alpha male establishes dominance by force, maintaining dominance primarily through threat, complimented by respect of hierarchical relations (410). While complicated by alliances, and overturned when a male successfully challenges the dominant, dominance establishes a pecking order that affects many aspects of behavior such as greeting, feeding and sexuality in chimpanzees. On the other hand dominance seems—when established—to allow for companionship relations to develop. Of course, Goodall noted that all female chimpanzees are dominated by males (*Chimpanzees*, 412). Dominance behaviors such as threat and removal of privilege were complemented by submissive behaviors and gestures such as deference and avoidance.

While ethologists Goodall and Frans de Waal among others discuss the evolutionary benefits dominance likely has provided, including a stable society which they say benefits dominant and subordinate alike, it seems far more parsimonious, following especially Goodall's attention to stress and its management in chimpanzees, to speculate a little differently. Males may have evolved aggression and dominance to manage stress over resource availability and sex hormones, while females would have stress to manage over male domination and sexual assertion, resources, sex hormones, infant protection, self protection while encumbered with children and the like.

Buried in young Hank's first impulse—take a kitten—is the idea that he will be identified with the predatory dominance of a bobcat. Sympathy surely complicates his culturally constructed, emotionally charged expectation, the anticipation of greater status in his community. Such ambitions aren't dreamed up all on our own. They are a product of subtle and overt

attractive modeling and discipline. Henry, father to eldest son Hank, “insisted on raising his firstborn to be as strong and self-sufficient as himself” (Kesey, 35). The reader is left to imagine what rewards and punishments—through verbal and visual cues and physical discipline—were used with or without restraint in childrearing. But Hank, as first a loyal and willing private, and later a sergeant, lieutenant and general in Henry’s ranks, enticed by attention and approval, enticed by control of friction, enticed by performance and success, by status as well as achievement—the panoptically instilled sense of self approval—would surely have made a good subject. Without history, as a values-oriented consciousness constructing courage, strength and self sufficiency implies, much is masked about why Henry has committed to this insistence. Fully, Hank’s aspiration to attain status by taking the bobcat is in response to dominance, expectations of approval and improved status from his father as well as others in town. Hank’s ambitions are culturally constructed, his desire for status as well as ways he can attain higher status. His actions suggest the Plains Indians social practice of counting coup, of returning to the circle of men and recounting acts of bravery, a practice known in the tribes of the Pacific Northwest as well (Linderman, 31). These are socially constructed practices perpetuated by male social dynamics, in the novel and elsewhere. Hank’s desire in this sense is constructed. If his culture’s older males had been environmentalists or naturalists, what might we expect Hank to desire?

Hank’s fear “knew the boy better than he knew himself, had known all along from that first glance that he wasn’t going to be satisfied until he had all three kittens” (Kesey, 101). Hank’s fear knows that if he is going to succeed in his father’s world as well as his larger social world in Wakonda, he will have to act big. Threat of the mother bobcat and the thorns in the berry thicket are nothing compared to the shame and humiliation he can expect to face, that has

already been modeled by scorn and denigration, suggested by Henry's sternness and orneriness, Henry's abrasive disgust towards his own father and Boney Stokes. Jane Goodall and her researchers frequently observed what she termed the charging display used primarily to challenge or maintain dominance among the chimps at Gombe. Goodall wrote that during "the charging display huge branches may be dragged or flailed, great rocks hurled or rolled, and vegetation swayed" (*Chimpanzees*, 122). Such behavior is reminiscent of ecocritic Neil Evernden's contemplation of cichlids and their tendency to make themselves larger than life to predators in his essay "Beyond Ecology: Self, Place and the Pathetic Fallacy." Goodall describes such display behaviors as ones that "increase the overall impression of size or dangerousness" (*Chimpanzees*, 122). Obviously, aggression due to dominance in chimpanzees is capable of causing environmental destruction and change, however minor the effects. This ring of truth about dominance in general should sound to us like a cacophony of fire alarms.

One cat is a story. Three cats is a tall tale, and we can't help but hesitate to wonder if the *umph* of the story is being constructed after the fact, an amalgam of fact and fiction. Apparently no one is around—or left alive—to question Hank's factuality. But to a large extent, just as with the Roman legend of Romulus and Remus raised by wolves, we can't help but feel the story is being manipulated in the telling. This is important for how the environment is represented. In "The Kid Goes Out Into Nature," I delved deeply into the natural history of the region in which the bobcat vignette takes place. The narrator says "He battled mud and vine" (Kesey, 103) as he retrieved the second kitten, but in the vignette's month of April, it seems much more likely that the ground would be covered in any number of diverse shoots, especially given that sunlight could filter down into the thicket enough to see. While far from fascist or nationalist in its construction, we can see how stories of this type taking place in a 'natural' or 'wild' environment

can be manipulated to evoke status, or even to intimidate.

Hank emerges with the third kitten, shoulders all in an old explosives box and brings it home “as if it were the spoils of a mighty battle” (Kesey, 104). Elsewhere in the novel we find more than one story that reveres hunting, and the culturally constructed value of the pride (of bobcats) as a trophy was offered historic resonance in the previous essay. The battle rhetoric further underlines the idea of counting coup, that bravery will be rewarded with status. But bravery is fully constructed here. He took the kittens at least in part out of sympathy for taking the first one away from its kin. Bobcats were shown in the previous essay to fear humans at least as much as Hank might have feared encountering the mother bobcat, so bravery in the vignette actually is a straw dog. And while we humans have constructed such games as stealing infants to demonstrate bravery, risking aggression, we have hidden from ourselves such vital ecological aspects as the loss of ecological services entailed by taking the bobcats, the problems encountered by domesticating wild animals both for humans and the animals themselves, as well as the gross dominance involved. Hank needs a good story to earn status in his community—the community of men as well as the community at large. In the late 1930’s, when the bobcat vignette roughly takes place, the American west was still largely defining itself against the backdrop of the ‘wild.’ Like chimpanzees needing a larger self to register with in society, we still evoke the wild to enlarge ourselves: wild sex, wild drugs, wild parties and culture. Careful, lest our lust for the wild collapse into mere lust for domination, for power.

Nevertheless, young Hank’s return has all the social effect he hopes for, perhaps more. Hank shows up scratched by feverish, repeated crawling in and out of the thorny thicket, and modestly answers “No, not really” when Joe Ben asks if he fought a wildcat. (Kesey, 104). Instead of one upping, he tells Joe Ben the truth, or demurely downplays his adventure. But

legend is far more important to self image in a socially constructed world where the ‘big one’ always gets away. Uncle Ben reacts to the “scratched and muddy face and triumphant eyes” with “Oh yeah you did... Maybe not head on. Maybe not a wildcat, but you fought something” (Kesey, 104). Hank’s triumphant eyes speak more to the attention he can expect to receive, attention that can only be reverence in his man’s world. His actions are rewarded by the oldest and most dominant male present. He doesn’t boast his coup, his uncle does, and his status is secured. Ben backs up his approval by building a cage big enough for young Hank to climb into.

By early December, young Hank has bragged to the kids at school of the kittens, now around seven months old. He plans to bring them in for a show and tell before the Christmas holiday. We have to wonder how egos have played out to this point. As an adult in the majority of the novel, Hank shows a humble and sensitive interiority, defiant and understated when confronting what he takes as nonsense. Hank’s triumphant eyes may have concealed thoughts such as ‘wait ‘till the kids at school get a load of this!’ A hubristic conviction that status would be more widely secured. All we really have to go on is our notions of a small town, the way the children may have responded to his father’s reputation and the common array of challenges, wins and losses (mostly wins?) Hank experienced, especially as a young athlete. We might be tempted to fall back to classical literary analysis, seeing what is building in the way the kids act towards him at school, at the end of the bobcat vignette, as evidence of a shameful hubris, a coercive moral and manipulative view such as bravery. I argue that from a psycho-social view, a dominant father would provoke a dominant son, and if we think of aggression in children often sublimated into achievement, young Hank may have been initially more proud of the cats themselves than of how they made him look. He might have just wanted to share the cats and his enjoyment of the cats with his classmates, though the marks of his father’s dominance would

surely have worn through somewhere in bravado.

In his ethological work on human dominance in organizations and institutions, *Emotions in Command*, Frank K. Salter notes that though little observational research exists on the effects of alcohol on dominance behaviors, “most laymen and experts agree that alcohol causes increased aggression” (132-133). Nothing is said of Henry’s drinking habits around the time Hank captured the bobcats, and the adventure would have occurred roughly during prohibition anyway. Elsewhere, Henry is characterized as a frequent, heavy drinker. More broadly, the West has been stereotyped as a world that escapes prohibitions, and in the early 1960’s when the bulk of the novel takes place, drinking is the Stamper nightly ritual, Henry daily at the bar, the logger’s social ritual as well. Much of the action in town takes place at the bar.

Elsewhere Jane Goodall has noted that in aggression, which is typically dominance-based for chimpanzees, the pattern seems to be that when a chimpanzee is frustrated in a confrontation, a weaker or lower status individual—often a female—is acted out upon (*40 Years*, 64). Rather than evoking the naturalistic fallacy, I merely suggest that this pattern in chimpanzees is a good one to look for in humans. Feminists, LGBT’s and people of ethnicity and color, particularly in colonized or strongly masculinized societies, are surely way ahead of me.

Hank follows in the footsteps of all the dominant, rebellious Stamper youth when he goes out to check on the bobcat cage, the night before he plans to take them to school. His father is out shoring up the underside of the house where it hangs off the bank by the river. A storm has been blowing and the river is up. ““Is that you, boy? What do you want out here this time of night?” [Henry] demanded fiercely, then as an afterthought asked, “You come out to give the old man a hand at floodtime, is that it?”” (Kesey, 106). But we already know that Hank has in some sense lost respect for Henry in his rejection “of the forceful punch of Henry’s curses,” just like Henry



lost respect in childhood for his father Jonas, and the myth of the male child in Stamper family history has always been to turn on the father. The narrator seems sympathetic to Hank's consciousness. In phantom rhetoric we hear; "The last thing in the boy's mind was freezing for an hour in this wind, hammering aimlessly on that crazy business of his father's... but he said, "I don't know, I might, then I might not"" (Kesey, 106). Hank remains deferential, as well as perhaps taunting, a form of subdominant passive aggression, as he seeks to find out the old man's wisdom on how much longer the tide will rise. When he gets his answer, he speaks in a pseudo-challenging way: "Yeah...I reckon that's about the way I see it...So I guess I'll go on in an' hit the sack. She's all yours" (Kesey, 106). Henry, reflecting on the enigmatic behavior, though no doubt used to doing things on his own, calls Hank "feisty" (Kesey, 107). Certainly Hank exhibits self interest in this exchange, but self interest seems partly implied by the subtle coercions or tough discipline that may have occurred in earlier years with respect to "that crazy business of his father's." One of the lessons Hank learns out of grief over the bobcat kittens—intermingled with guilt over not having worked with his father the night before—is the value of his father's "crazy business." Hank becomes religiously devoted to shoring up the house.

Ending the childhood portion of the bobcat vignette, Hank says;

For a while kids at school asked me about them bobcats I was always blowing about, how come I hadn't brought them bobcats to school?...but I just told them to fuck off, and after I told them enough times and showed them I meant what I said a time or two, nobody mentioned it anymore (Kesey, 109).

No one at school sympathizes with his grief. The loss of the bobcats for the kids in town is just another pawn in the game of domination, of attaining and challenging status. Rather than receiving support for his grief—complicated by guilt over blowing off his father, complicated by playing the socialized game of dominance at school, by his bragging and boasting—there is no awareness of grief, no awareness of the emotion of sympathy elicited by the bobcat kittens.

Frans de Waal remarks that “Monkeys react to the death or disappearance of an attachment figure in a way outwardly similar to human grieving” (39). Hank’s attachment to the kittens is implied in the amount of time he spent with them in their cage. De Waal’s discussion of the research notes a protest phase and a despair phase. The anger and bargaining phases that Hank becomes stuck in are more purely human. Depression and acceptance, according to Elizabeth Kubler-Ross in *On Death and Dying*, follow if indirectly from early stages of grief in humans. Our grieving process surely is complicated by social conditioning and responses, especially dominance-based social responses. Hank becomes stuck in anger and bargaining, much like the anger and bargaining that went into selling the American public on the Iraq war after 911. Loss stacks up for Hank on the way to telling the bobcat story, loss of his boat to the river, loss of his dad, loss of Joe Ben, loss of his wife Vivian.

Hank makes a bargain with the river, the being that receives his projected dominance, the thing bigger than him that he has to reckon with, providing closure to the vignette:

...that river was after some things I figured belonged to me. It’d already got some and was all the time working to get some more. And in as how I was well known as one of the Ten Toughest Hombres this side of the Rockies, I aimed to do my best to hinder it...going after it with everything you got, fighting and kicking, stomping and gouging, and cussing it when everything else went sour...If You Wants to Win, You Does Your Best. (Kesey, 110-11).

The idea of it is as irrational as he asserts that it’s logical. The defense of an ego inflated—yet interpellated—by society’s expectations also moves like a phantom behind the rhetoric. Who taught him to respond to grief this way, let alone the environment? But his experience of grief has been socialized like his ability to indulge in sympathy, socialized right out of him. The language of the excerpt begs to draw the analogy between young Hank the predatory thief and the river as a much larger predator. The language reinforces the illogic of dominance, the idea of ‘winning’ against nature, rather than recognizing the need to cooperate with and know intimately

the ecology of the more than human world. Faintly, the uber-motif of Hank versus community hovers in the background as well, the need to have something to fight kicking and screaming, when everything else goes sour: the embodiment of the traditional western American archetype.

Grief manifests highly emotional states that tough guys have no place for. Meanwhile we only have to look at the research to see the impact of such missing states of human being. Children's behavior isn't self-created in the main, especially in social groups. Behavior is modeled off adult behavior and the behavior of dominant others; from attractive, successful models as well as assertive, aggressive individuals, who in turn were influenced by their influential peers, people who dominate conflict and attention. Or people who as a collective successfully model and meet their needs through partnership. This is what makes modeling behavior critical to human cultural evolution. When under the duress of stress or aggression, our reactions will likely take us back to our most dominant and controlling responses. However these responses have been modeled and reinforced by reaction in the past, they will likely be our bottom line in high stress experiences.

Greta Gaard succinctly lays out Val Plumwood's master model in "Towards a Queer Feminism." From that model, I argue that backgrounding, radical exclusion, incorporation, instrumentalism and homogenization stand out as features that men have traditionally, stereotypically evoked in setting up domination amongst each other, and are readily identifiable in the novel. In backgrounding, "the master relies on the services of the other and denies dependency" (Gaard, 117). Hank is dependent upon his society for the values of status he aspires to, though traditional literary criticism and ideal male social constructs have denied this dependency. With radical exclusion, "the master magnifies the differences between self and other and minimizes shared qualities" (Gaard, 117). As a child, as one of the dominated along

with women and animals, Hank doesn't draw this distinction. Rather, he sympathizes with the kittens when they cry longingly for each other. He readily inhabits their caged space. As modern humans, we have typically resisted the suggestion, as Jane Goodall and more guardedly Frans de Waal make, that we are more like our animal cousins than we may suspect, and perhaps would benefit from our study and understanding of them.

Incorporation takes "the master's qualities...as the standard, and the other is defined in terms of...possession or lack of those qualities" (Gaard, 117). The standard has been the traditional western American male archetype, the cowboy hero, the 'real man' against which any boy raised in such a male sociological setting is measured, and strives with Foucaultian docile body and panoptic policing to achieve. Individuation, whole humanness, and the play of masculine and feminine qualities when and where they might best serve are swept away in the most extreme stereotypical identities. Hank, as I will discuss more fully in the final essay, has a rich identity that cannot be shared because even after his dominant kinship foil—his father—is retired from his dominant role, the town continues to interpellate the hero, the tough guy, the dominant they can challenge.

Instrumentalism, "in which the other is constructed as having no ends [of one's] own, [whose] sole purpose is to serve as a resource for the master" (Gaard, 117), begins with Hank's instrumentalist purposes for the kittens, for improving his social status. But the key instrumentalism in the novel lays in the co-opting of everything as a means to secure or challenge status. As long as status is an obsession, nothing is safe from instrumentalism, whether it be women, other humans, or the more than human world. Self actualization theorist Abraham Maslow's early studies centered on dominance reactions in monkeys, the first of their kind in a laboratory setting. Comparing dominance in humans and primates in the 1930's, he observed that

in pairs of humans, commonly one dominated another and the “subordinate,” in his terms, respected the dominant more than vice versa (Maslow, 50). While his leading example is of a dominant wife and a submissive husband, he goes on to suggest just as Jane Goodall discusses for chimpanzees a hierarchy where the dominant has subordinate roles, and the subordinate has dominant roles. Maslow had noticed the structure of domination organizing personal as well as social and professional relationships in America at the time. Submissive feelings Maslow said emerged from such feelings as the “child-parent attitude,” while dominant feelings included “masterfulness and mastery” (50-52).

Maslow, according to editor Richard J. Lowry, had a “keen interest in female psychology;” linked “dominance feeling” to “self esteem,” seeing both as “somehow intimately tied to psychological health” (71).<sup>17</sup> Maslow at one point theorized dominance behavior in all encompassing terms: “When two people come together in a face to face relationship, a conscious or unconscious sizing up process ensues...[much like] in primates” (54). In a footnote Maslow said the word ‘dominance’ was chosen in part because “at least our phrase makes the animal work continuous with work for children and adult human beings” (52). Hank doesn’t seem to size people up this way, though his comedic interactions with those like regional union organizer Draeger and local union boss Evenwrite suggest a lack of appreciation or respect. Yet Hank has been perceived as the dominant, interpellated as the dominant. Kesey does a good job elsewhere in the novel of setting up this dynamic. Lee’s perceptive filters are rigidly and narrowly shaped by expectations of domination that often aren’t even there, even while many of the men in town refuse to frame desire or reaction in any other way than to frame it around the notion of Hank and Stamper domination. Unacknowledged and unrevealed to others around him—and much like his father Henry before—what Hank wants is justice, to be left alone, and to

immerse in the wonders of the natural world.

Gaard ends her discussion of Plumwood's mastery model with homogenization, "in which the dominated class of others is perceived as uniformly homogenous" (118). The dominated males in the novel are boys who have yet to be made into men, and men who are measured only in terms of how they don't measure up to an impossible—and projected—ideal. Goodall notes that the alpha male in chimpanzees is always in threat of attack by up and coming younger, stronger or more aggressive males. Ironically, the leading male is not always or even often the dominant male. Stability never lasts, though for a species with no other way to manage aggression, the benefits of dominance are noticeable when lost (Goodall, *Chimpanzees*, 410).

Salter in *Emotions in Command* follows other ethological findings in asserting that dominance and hierarchies are valuable to human organizations and society. But one of the somewhat contrary findings in his book has to do with studies M.H. Goodwin undertook on commands and directives used by urban black children in unstaged conversation. Boys tended to be more hierarchical in the same sex studies, and top ranking individuals issued directives typically without explanation: "Leaders generally refused others' directives;" forms of assertion from suggestion to "bald command" (Salter, 71). Such behavior has to come from somewhere, and one of the peculiarities in *Sometimes* is that, regardless of the language Hank used to become the alpha male, he is far more egalitarian on most occasions, asserting dominance more by invalidating, backhanded criticisms and humor. Alternately Goodwin found that girls in the same sex studies "issued suggestions rather than commands... 'let's' statements" (Salter, 73). Salter characterized hierarchy-eschewing behaviors such as explanations of group benefit for an activity, and utilizations of 'we' and 'us' over "the status building I" (73). Certainly, as in *Sometimes*, we would have to theorize that some of this "softening" is modeled by women who

stand in a culture dominated by men. In the homes of the boys and girls Goodwin described, we would have to suspect that the way directives were modeled by men was at least as assertive, if not occasionally enforced by threats of or actual aggression. And what about the impacts of being a black male in a white dominated society with a history of enslavement and bigotry? Still, we can see how sensitivity training—or Hank’s sympathy for the bobcat kittens—may soften our hierarchies, shifting our attention from status competition to more important questions such as how to be in a sustainable world, how to rehabilitate the ecological and social damages we have imposed.

Pierre Bourdieu, writing primarily on the egregious cultural institutions that entrap women in mechanisms of masculine constructed dominance, argues that “symbolic force,” deeply embedded in our language, cultures and institutions, “is all the more powerful because... exerted invisibly and insidiously through a symbolically structured physical world and early, prolonged experience of interactions informed by the structures of domination” (38). Bourdieu notes that bodily emotions, passions and sentiments such as shame, humiliation, guilt; admiration and respect, “are all the more powerful when...betrayed [through]...anger or impotent rage,” among other ways of submitting (38). At one point in *Sometimes*, union leader Draeger, attempting to persuade Hank to break his contract with Wakonda Pacific, plies Hank with the dominance of masculine loyalty, the betrayal of his friends and neighbors. “You served in Korea...Do you ever think that the same loyalty that your country expected of you overseas could be expected of you here at home?” (Kesey, 416). Such embedded acts of domination inform just how deep its manipulations run in Hank’s culture as well as our own. Traditional exegesis would focus only questions of loyalty; loyalty to self and others.

Bourdieu argues “men are also prisoners, and insidiously victims, of the dominant

representation...Being a man...implies an ought to be” (49). Like young Hank’s perception of fear as challenge, for the purposes of securing his social destiny in the bobcat vignette, Bourdieu calls destiny “the bodily inclination to realize an identity that has been constituted as a social essence and so transformed” (50). In speaking of kinship dominance, Bourdieu argues “Inasmuch as the real subject is a collective—the lineage of the house—itsself shaped by the demands immanent in the symbolic order...honor presents itself as an ideal” (50). Kesey’s *Sometimes* may present a much more profound question for readers, regarding which collective will reign in dominating the social order—and individual masculine identity.

In “The Abstract Wild: A Rant,” Jack Turner argues that to overturn the ecological crisis, “we must become so intimate with wild animals, with plants and places, that we answer to their destruction from the gut” (25). Young Hank follows Turner if accidentally in his relations and loss with the bobcats. A month after the union logger’s meeting where he has recollected the childhood experience of the bobcats, during the first cold fronts sending migratory birds south en masse for the winter, “Hank hears the geese call a dozen different thoughts, stimulating a dozen different feelings” (Kesey, 398). Hank’s deep ecological knowledge of waterfowl is recounted a few pages later, along with his somewhat mystical aversion to hunting geese. Far from the cowboy hero, Hank stands interpellated as the dominant by his society, while preserving that part of individual subjectivity necessary to transcend the traditional stereotypical Western male persona. Back in the blackberry thicket, we can sense what young Hank experienced in the words of Turner’s prose, his own synesthetic experience. This experience of the berry thicket is lost in a socialized telling of what happened there, reduced to what will elevate Hank in status, what will give us a character taught a moral lesson. Turner’s reverence for predators and the visceral human experience they evoke—experience that offers a prototype for all human



experience undertaken with deep and reverential attention—underlies the cultivation of subjecthood in Hank, the caring aspect of his relations with others and the more than human world. We hear echoes of young Hank’s experience in the idea of it, and Turner argues that after direct experience, what has contributed most to our love of wild places and nature “is the art literature, myth and lore of nature” (89).

Offering a western American masculine situated argument for the wild, Turner at the same time idiosyncratically mentions crying over the plight of our natural world: “Like most men I know,” Turner says, “my rage is in direct proportion to my sense of helplessness” (41). Turner exhibits the same kind of violence as Hank and his numerous fistfights in the essay “Mountain Lions.” In response to a man who was throwing popped grain into a caged and subdued mountain lion’s face to provoke a reaction, to make him ‘perform,’ to be the instrument of his domination, Turner says: “I grabbed [the man’s] throat and sank my thumb and middle finger into the joint behind his Adam’s apple...I just wanted to terrify him” (42)—to make him stop. Like Hank taking the first bobcat, Turner says “at the time I did not “think” at all” (42). Turner offers a number of self diagnoses for this act. Mentioning elsewhere in the book that he was raised by a marine, is it possible that socialization—backed by laudable values—had a hand? He was protecting one of his own. Reading of his passion for and practice of Buddhism, I have to believe that regardless of his certainty that it was the only thing he could have done, he couldn’t have escaped without a touch of regret. Free will obviously needs some re-thinking in such an understanding of dominance as I have laid out here, though post-structuralism may preempt that need.

Regardless, the need for partnership in our world is monumental. Hank’s evocation of sympathy and grief are key experiences that we as men—as well as humans—need to feel free

and supported to experience. Our societies, and for men this includes our male social and work groups, have enormous power to shape who we are. At all times we are shadowed by dominant leaders, their subtly and overtly expressed moralities, attractive and successful models, our consciousnesses framed by the framing they provide. We may not be able to rid ourselves of the need to affiliate, to belong, hence the hook that keeps us compromising partnership behaviors and languages with older dominance-based ones. The traditional western American male archetype, the cowboy hero, has been the worst enemy of real males of the American west. Wallace Stegner noted its myth, Bernard DeVoto alluded to its use to manipulate resource extraction and environmental depredation in the west, and Ken Kesey has offered a very complex tome from which we can see how our myths and values have been used against us to interpellate the dominant male in spite of ourselves. In Hank's expression of it, to defy society in order to fulfill capitalist aspirations imposed by colonizing industry. Only when we become conscious can we take full responsibility for changing our world. But if our world refuses to see, refuses to call out for anything but the dominant male, what can we do? What are we left with?

Literary critic M. Gilbert Porter says

Hank feels...great weariness over the pressure he experiences at the top. He suppresses such feelings [as guilt, tenderness, anguish, grief, concern, love for natural beauty] as signs of weakness, for he has been taught to believe in strength and to show the world only the strong face of rugged individualism (60-61).

I have worked to debunk this myth with the decoding of dominance in the bobcat vignette and as it plays out in Hank's life. Hank loses to the call of the rugged individual dominant that town and his father in childhood demand, even as he creates a subjecthood not entirely built from the socially interpellated dominant archetype. Rather than suppressing feelings such as guilt, tenderness, anguish, grief, concern—and especially love for natural beauty—, Hank shows through hindsight narration that these emotions were often present, yet kept to himself. Society

keeps setting him up, over the bobcats, over sleeping with his stepmom, over the whole logging business, and he has no other choice but to defend himself, to hang tough, as Joe Ben would say. We see the depth and aggressiveness of that interpellation in Joe Ben's retelling of Hank's road to fighting the ringer in high school.

The threat of loss of the dominant icon is perhaps too much to bear in a world that bases its security on patterns of domination. Jane Goodall relates the anecdote that when one dominant male chimpanzee temporarily lost his status, aggressive incidents more than doubled in the community until his position of dominance was re-established (*Chimpanzees*, 410). But we have to believe in a democratic, pluralist world; that this idea of dependence on the dominant is socially constructed too, out of depravations and ignorance of a partnership supported selfhood.

Porter likens Hank to a mighty tree that people do and do not want to see fall, ascribing the terror that bar owner Teddy sees in the faces in the bar at the end of the novel to the loss of the hero they aspired to (71). I see rather the loss of the dominant, the ideal upon which the people projected their greatest fears as well as their greatest desires. The one who controls, wins, is the most talked about, the most revered—if also the most despised. Hank isn't a mighty tree so much as he's the spar tree, the natural link in the process of high lead logging that facilitates rapid logging extraction. He'll be there serving the demands of the social megamachine until he's cut down or he falls down, whichever comes first. Maslow's early thinking, that commonly people framed interactions by 'sizing each other up,' fits the script of a Hollywood western far better than it does our need for caring, feeling, conflict-resolving people. Getting rid of the hero would allow us, as Timothy Morton has done with the category 'nature,' to see what real motivations and causalities are underlying the veneer of the traditional western American male archetype. Until dominance has been replaced by models of emotional

intelligence, partnership and collaborative behavior in conflict—I daresay wisdom or solutionmaking as opposed to fights of status and power—we will be limited in what we as western American males and human beings can do to bring about sustainability and ecological rehabilitation. Moreso, until men have transformed dominance-based relationships into partnership-based ones, and are modeling egalitarian respect, listening, and ecological response, we all—men and women, of all ethnicity and race—will continually be faced with the “now it’s our turns” of the world; revolution, not evolution.

Post-structural feminists such as Val Plumwood, queer theorists such as Greta Gaard, and earlier theorists such as Michel Foucault have established theoretical understandings of domination as it has been rooted in Euro-American religious, scientific and social institutions. Numerous race, class and gender theorists—as well as deep ecologists and ecofeminists—have deepened our understanding of domination. Their work needs to be extended from theory into deep critical analysis of works that harbor strong potential for critiques of domination.

Ken Kesey once said his father believed a time comes when a son should whip his father: “He’s got to know he can outrun, outwrestle, outlove, outanything his old man” (Tanner, 4). Barry H. Leeds noted in his brief biography on Kesey that in the highly experimental years just after writing *Sometimes*, the years depicted in Tom Wolfe’s *The Electric Koolaid Acid Test*, “there were already those who began to become disaffected by his dominance, a preview of the incredible flights of egotism he was to take during the mid and late 1960’s” (4). While we can’t take an author and his life to be the only or authoritative voice in understanding his work, at the same time one rule of thumb for writers has been to write about what you know, what you have experienced. Race, class and gender critics, while perhaps appalled by transgressions occurring in the novel, would no less find a wealth of material to illustrate how domination in North

America has been constructed. Ecocritics too could find this text virtually inexhaustible.

I have attempted to show how domination exists in Ken Kesey's *Sometimes a Great Notion* in the bobcat vignette, in a textual, cultural and inter-relational way. The stereotype and archetypal ideal of the traditional male of the American West, the cowboy hero, the early Clint Eastwood type, the Marlboro Man, is the institution of domination in the American West and the United States' grand myth at large that has widely affected how men relate to women, children, racial and ethnic others, the natural environment—and each other. Traditional forms of literary exegesis, emphasizing values such as honor, independence, free will, loyalty, bravery, self reliance and the like, disappear the real forces in human culture—as in our close cousins the primates—that have historically shaped human being, preventing it from becoming more humane, more sustainable. The partnership model of culture calls upon us to review as deeply as possible the traditional canon of American literature, as well as our greatly expanded horizons since the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, to analyze and identify where and how dominance-based behavior, consciousness and identity, no matter by and towards whom, have been embedded in our language and culture. My hope is that this work will go in some small way towards producing a more partnership oriented world.

## CONCLUSION: DOMINATION AND SUBJECTHOOD REPRISED

*No, you can't ever fake being weak. You can only fake being strong.*<sup>18</sup>  
—Hank, *Sometimes a Great Notion*

Fistfighting holds center stage as the local pastime in the novel. More than an outlet for Saturday night's juiced up tempers in the local bar The Snag, fistfighting becomes a means of settling old scores and setting up new ones. The ringer in one key fight—Biggie Newton, representing the economically depressed, logging-dependent townfolk—accuses Hank of poor sportsmanship. Domination interpellates itself. Local union boss Evenwrite wants Hank beat for the problems he's caused union success as well as for purely personal reasons. Losing a fight or competition in the novel sets up resentment leading irresistibly to another challenge. There's always a reason before and a reason after. Dominating—winning—invariably interpellates a challenger. Fistfighting gives those choosing sides and vested in the outcome a means of living vicariously through the fighters, rooting for their guy while venting sundry work-a-day frustrations as well as intractable life and economic issues, aspiring to ambition through passionate, vicarious existence. Think of the anticipation, the adrenaline, the social cues enhanced by the weekly rhythm of living: comments by others at work, in the street or the bar anticipating another hurly-burly Saturday night, fueled by inhibition-relieving alcohol. Hank regularly experiences tremors in his hands before committing to a fight, a visceral emblem of the fight-or-flight hormones and neurochemicals released into his system, priming behavioral rituals

and preparations.

The circumstances leading up to the fight with Biggie—the cause célèbre for the townfolk—goes far beyond Hank’s indomitable Saturday night bar fight champion title, far beyond repeated besting of Newton. In contrast to turn of the century, subsistence-oriented Native Americans in the novel, apparently adapted to the vicissitudes of climate and resource availability, Wakondans—like other townfolk up and down the coast “all hamstrung by geographic economies” (Kesey, 44)—are caught in a bust of the market-based timber industry boom-and-bust cycle.<sup>19</sup> Dependent upon nature yet hamstrung by the vicissitudes of a distant market economy and the strategic choices of a centralized West Coast corporation: cherrypicking the cheapest available labor and lumber from among its many tentacles reaching deep into the forests and economies of the Pacific Northwest. Meanwhile the illusory prospect of big money and a secure money-stream looms as the American dream for prospective workers, a wealth of opportunity as it were even as Kesey catalogs the reality of depletion and surplus. Private property is marketed under the aegis of “Prosperity and New Frontiers,” while a “long row of empty storefronts” tells a different story (45). In a once and wishful future empty shelves crave manufactured consumer desires: candy, Skol, deviled meat, spiced beans. Places where “three or four decades back” a “booming throng of bearded, steaming, calk-booted men” would pay “three or four times the city price for a dozen eggs” (45).<sup>20</sup>

A small group of pro-union bar regulars “recognized as the ruling body of the town’s opinion” (46) caucus over causes in *The Snag*. There’s “a minor recession under the regime of that general” (45), presumably the Eisenhower administration. A union laborer disputes: “The trouble ain’t administration, it’s automation. Homelite saws, one man yarders, mobile donkeys [engines]—why, half the men can cut twice the trees” (45-46).<sup>21</sup> Their rallying cry is “the Six

Hour Day with Eight Hour Pay,” putting “all our members to cuttin’ twice the trees;” until “some wet blanket” unfailingly recalls; “we ain’t got twice the trees any more” (46). Kesey elsewhere downplays notions of missing a house or television set payment and turns temporary unemployment in an industry that at best was historically seasonal into an identity issue.<sup>22</sup> The bar commentator only further suggests that embeddedness in the capitalist scheme has evoked the necessity of greater buying power, more leisure time, and a strong and stable identity. Historic union battles were typically waged over safe, egalitarian working conditions, job security and pay commensurate with work and risk. These are secondary issues in the novel—though the recent strike has people pinching pennies. Retailers dependent on logging dollars such as the theater owner are finding their version of the American dream squelched in the process. Even more egregious in Kesey’s politically manufactured, free market favoring, anti-union rhetoric is the idea that while Hank Stamper and Stamper Enterprises resist toeing the union line—because it would mean taking a substantial loss for the benefit of a self interested community, because “You talkin’ sign over t’ you all the say-so I got of my business” (107) as another mill owner puts it—choosing to scab for Wakonda Pacific asserts the myths of freedom, independence and Horatio Alger bootstrap success. In the meantime, freedom and independence conceal reinforcement and reproduction of capitalist moralities and fulfillment of market-based extraction demands.

Hank is consumed by competition, a competition driven to defiant frenzy by the pressures of town and union leaders to stop logging.<sup>23</sup> But union and independent are both represented in the novel primarily as pawns in capitalist extractive interest, the rhetoric and logic of capitalist domination running back through the town’s earliest, oldest citizens, Henry Stamper and Boney Stokes. The invisible hand of the free market controls all, controls the rationales and demands of



all outlooks, driving rhetorics and logics of production, discipline and domination. And of course, domination stratifies the entire community. Regional union leader Draeger imagines the laws of manipulating men, “fools” as he calls them (11). Blue collar Evenwrite despises the intellectualized white collar Draeger, as Draeger utilizes absurdity to humiliate him in front of everyone at the Snag. Evenwrite craves violence and monkeywrenching to intimidate Hank, but Draeger relies on patriotic and communitarian arguments to leverage Hank’s stand, and stoops so low as to manipulate town opinion with false gossip. Draeger uses mock subordination that ultimately elevates his status over Evenwrite, in front of Evenwrite’s peers. Intelligence becomes a mode of domination as well as a catcall for counter-domination, as when Evenwrite challenges: “Since you’re so smart” (392). Evenwrite feints with self-subordinating rhetoric: “I’m jus’ a dumbass sawyer!” (392). As Evenwrite becomes frustrated by Draeger’s domination of attention and approval, he dominates Teddy, “venting his frustration” (391).

Early on the reader learns of Teddy’s routine tolerance of domination, his belief in his own superiority. Social relations at the bar are structured hierarchically with the lumberjack ideal at the top. The wino shingle bolt cutter was “reduced” to the living he makes, “A great comedown” that “rotted” his ability to project his presence (49). Teddy “was only a fixture,” the low man on the totem pole (49). Given the dominant economic engine is the lumberjack’s dollar, every other venture feeds off his production of capital. Yet liquor sales are up during the strike, and Teddy’s convinced the town’s issue isn’t monetary. Meanwhile the loggers emasculate with the nickname “Teddybear,” yelling “Damn it boy, let’s come to life,” and “Bust your fat little ass” (48, 386). Servitude is subordinated and humiliated. Teddy answers subordinately with “Yes, sir,” visibly nervous after such an exchange, acting “with a great show of haste to make up for the delay” (48). Teddy apparently compares himself with Napoleon Bonaparte, and thinks of

his customers as morons: “the big idiots had to ignore him...It is threatening to perceive superiority in someone so much—” (48) and leaves the reader hanging, just as his outrage and hate are left unexpressed. Draeger writes: “Café owners are more frustrated than the common laborer...The common laborer answers only to the foreman; the café owner answers to every patron who stops in” (86).

Thus, domination rooted in capitalist interpellated identities as well as market-based boom and bust pains are strong sources of grievance for Wakondans. Forces too big for day to day consideration, too embedded in local and national consciousness to nakedly confront. Local opinion blames the local dominant, scapegoating Hank. The notion of pulling the big man down, cutting him down to size, getting him off his high horse binarizes community against individual, normal against breaking the curve, socialist and communitarian against the stratification of capitalist economics and identities. The logger’s identity is given the greatest status and power. Like critics DeVoto and Stegner pointed out of cowboys and hardrock miners in the West, the logging identity has been hijacked and reproduced for maximizing labor and resource extraction to external markets, enabling corporations to pay minimal production overhead for retail profits. Henry exemplifies this ideal in his reproduction of whip-cracking motivational, disciplinary language undoubtedly used on him and that he in turn used to create and maintain a capitalist enterprise: “Wake it an’ shake it! Wag it an’ shag it!...Give me some whistlepunks! Give me some bully jacks! Give me some fallers an’ chasers an’ chokesetters! I can’t run me a show without me some loggers!...It’s time to get to makin’ your mark in the world!” (166).

Henry’s language is all about possession and instrumentality, controlling others with that grand aspiration to make your mark, at the expense of intact and healthy ecosystems. Henry valorizes the machine: “You can’t whup the swamps with a animal,” Henry crows, “You got to

have a machine...The trucks! The cats! The yarders! I say more power to ‘em!” (238). The old days were anything but nostalgic for Henry: “bust your bleedin’ ass from dark to dark and maybe fall three trees...any snot nosed kid nowadays could lop all three of ‘em over in half a hour with a Homelite” (238). The irony of mechanized, efficient labor is that, rather than necessitating the logger’s craft and status, capitalist progress has made cogs in the machine, lever pullers and seat warmers.<sup>24</sup>

Henry’s fury against the natural environment rises to fever pitch, but the reader may hear capitalist motivations in his ravings: “You need to get in there with some machines an’ tear hell out of it!...Tear it out! Only thing! Chop at the big stuff and burn the brush, grub up the brambles and poison the vines!” (239). The furor of capitalist motivation is rooted in a capitalist serving logging identity. At the end of the novel Henry, on his deathbed, berates Boney Stokes for advising his family in his youth “to go to Eugene for the Welfare, because we couldn’t endure a season alone in these woods” (557). This cross-wiring of identity with manipulation of it, of what is strong and what is weak, occurs again when Evenwrite, trying to persuade local union members to illegally picket the Stamper mill, says; “if we don’t do this right soon...you boys might as well tell your women either get used to the state’s fifty-two forty a week or go to looking for you a different line of work!” (354). Draeger, attempting to manipulate Hank—a Korean war vet—into supporting union interests, plies him with the localist-loyalist argument.

The moral and identity-based leveraging of these arguments are used on men who have unwittingly over-identified themselves with the traditional western American male archetype, grounded in capitalist intent and vulnerable to these machinations, whether used to achieve the goals of the union or utilized to achieve the goals of West Coast based Wakonda Pacific—or the American dream. In the hospital, where Boney expects to squash Henry with his losses, the

boisterous Henry will have none of Boney's domination. Henry proclaims; "I always said...that I could outlog any man this side of the Cascades, with one arm tied behind my back" (555).

Boney's arguments symbolize manipulable society and conformity over the individual as they've always done. But Henry pulls back the curtain on Boney's sham communitarianism in their back and forth dialogue: "You helped us right out of that feed store...We all unselfishly offered the necessities of life...You wanted what in payment? Our house an' property? A mortgage on the next ten year?...the organization made no such demands" (557). Henry was free to do as he pleased.

Winning and losing, community versus the individual, fighting for dominance and embracing competition all have been structured in the novel by the social megamachine of capitalist interest, logic and rhetorics, which entrap Hank through family, society and profession. Kesey repeatedly draws the same picture over and over again. The fight for dominant status is a fight pitched between the big man and the little man, community versus individual interest, the winner a winner take all of values; hierarchical discipline putting the individual back in line—or the rogue dominant earning the embittered right to live another day on his own terms, before the challenger returns out of indomitable society to knock his block off, to take him down a peg.

Biggie's challenge against Hank is socially constructed. Les Gibbons, a neighbor of Hank's, bedeviled by Hank's making sport, making a buffoonery of his awkward clumsiness, envious of Hank's dominance, passes along the word of Biggie's accusation. Somehow the traditional western American male archetype is imbued with a snare that won't allow for attack on one's honor and integrity, let alone his independence and dominance. Hank utilizes the moment in front of a handful of others headed upstream in a motorboat for a bit of dominating theatrics. He drains and crushes a fuel additive can and hurls it into the river, still dripping with

petrochemical. He dominates nature in a display that says ‘look what I can do to you,’ a display that pollutes the river, requires an audience to enjoy it, interpellate it. Alone, Hank’s performance could only signify the frustrated need to dominate something—the way he has been dominated.

The entire town craves Hank’s beat down, and when Hank wins the long, bloody fight with Biggie on Halloween, the town is bitter, dissatisfied and still seeking blood. Community in the novel is affirmed by a man’s willingness to be beaten, to lose like everyone else has to. Hubris in the novel may be constructed around Hank’s refusal to lose to the bitter end. But the town’s final victory—the Stamper outfit pared down with extensive passive aggression, a logging accident kills Joe Ben, puts Henry on his deathbed and, without labor, forces Hank to give up on the logging contract—doesn’t bode as expected for the people. Draeger writes: “Man is certain of nothing but his ability to fail...the unbeliever, the blasphemer, the dissenter, will stimulate in us the most righteous of furies...A worker is never so angered as by an owner who believes in the predominance of management” (86).

Teddy has always seen the look of fear in the bar, but when Hank finally seems beaten back in line, Teddy sees a look even in Biggie’s face he has never seen. Could it be grief at the loss of the one man that embodied for the town the ideal of the traditional western American male archetype? The loss of the archetype itself? Biggie bemoans the fact that now there is no worthwhile contender. Teddy deems it a look of terror. Hank’s loss initiates an era where subjecthood for all men in the novel may require grieving, may require a period of severe dislocation and bewilderment at the prospect that the self interpellated by the social megamachine no longer holds the center. It may prove too late for the more than human world, but the way men fall apart at the end of the novel suggests Hank’s loss is all the more each and every man’s loss. And herein lies, in this moment of grief set aside for the death of a powerful

archetype that continues its reach from beyond the grave, the opportunity to explore and experience a more self determined way of being, one's own territory of subjecthood.

How does subjecthood manifest itself in Hank? Through a number of idiosyncratic relations, including those with brother Leland, wife Vivian, and especially the more than human world. Leland frames Hank unrelentingly in terms of the dominant to justify a campaign of retaliation. Yet even on the night of Lee's arrival, Hank evinces protectiveness, telling Viv to wait until Lee has recovered from his trip to meet him. As the men head upriver for the forest the following day, Hank reflects on a persistent desire: "All that ride up the river I sit like a knot on a log, no notion in the world how to talk to him or what to talk about" (172). Hank's impulse to connect with Lee is complicated by dominant personality traits—and the way others perceive him. He wakes up in a bad mood that first morning, knowing if they got into conflict, he'd "get an urge to pop somebody" (163). Joe Ben and wife both corner Hank to coach his behavior. Jan tells him to "be real easy with the boy;" Joe Ben dubs Lee "one of the sensitives" (162, 163). Their interpellating expectations smother recognition of Hank's concern for his relationship with Lee. Hank tells the reader; "I knew I was going to have to walk on eggs just to keep the peace" (162). Even when Hank is trapped in his father's personality, he sets himself apart from the guy who acts like his father: "try as I may, I can hear myself sounding just exactly like old Henry doing some first rate ass chewing, and I know I couldn't pick a worse way to talk to Lee. But I'm damned if I can stop it" (178).

Elsewhere, Hank's concern for Lee is much less tainted by his compulsions towards dominance. Adult Lee goes to the beach to rendezvous and scurrilously seduce Hank's wife Viv. Recalling his last time there as a child, he tells of falling into a thirty foot hole in the dunes. Hank found him then, telling young Lee an old family story while fashioning a ladder from a pine tree,

concealing the danger Lee was in. Henry called it a “devil’s stovepipe” (319), where the sand piled up around a pine grove and rotted out the trunks. Hank worried that “any little jostling” could collapse the hole (317). Remarkably, when he finally pulls little Leland from the hole, he describes in marvelous detail the ecology of the dunes, what made Henry’s villainous, terrifying “devil’s stovepipe.” Hank respects the danger of the place, but telling connotes a deep recognition, articulate understanding for what made it that way.

With Vivian, Hank shows a side of himself that Lee describes as “most unheroic” (146). Eavesdropping on Hank and Vivian’s conversation, Lee hears them carrying on over Vivian’s hurt feelings from the catty women in town, because Hank’s enterprise is working while the rest of the men aren’t. Lee says; “I heard sobbing in the next room...I heard Hank’s pleading whisper. ‘I’m sorry, kitten. Please, I was just hacked off at McKeever. Not you...I’ll talk to the old man about it in the morning...please...Please’” (146). Hank’s relationship with Viv is a mixture of stereotypical traditional male expectations of service and this kind of care. He angers her at his chronic disregard for wounds, whether he receives them in fistfights or working in the woods. But he’s got this tender, loving side as well that defies stereotypical husband-wife role play. The reader cannot miss the connotation set up by calling her “kitten,” suggestive of the bobcats and the cage in which he and the cats negotiated relationship. Though Hank calls Viv ‘chicken’ when he wants her to do something for him—instrumentalizing Viv while isolating himself on the traditional male pedestal from the rest of the world—Hank’s relationship with Viv evokes unique subjecthood as well. Though Viv usually milks the cow, one night she asks Hank to do it. “Just this once, woman,” Hank says, but she “smiles and turns away” (83). Hank “knew she hadn’t been fooled by his hardass tone...He wondered if she also knew just how much he enjoyed coming out and doing the milking” (83).<sup>25</sup>

Hank's love for the more than human world extends in all directions beyond the domestic livestock, beyond even the bobcats. At the start of the rainy season, Hank's happy to hear the geese arrive. And though they drive him to discontent, exacerbating sleepless nights with noisy flocks bigger than any he remembers, he's shocked that he could ever tire of them.<sup>26</sup> The ecology of his desire and appreciation constitute a form of subjecthood that belongs to Hank and only Hank, yet is accessible to anyone who has the sense to listen, look, let go of the interpellations of the social megamachine; tune in and turn on. When Joe Ben wants to hunt the geese, Hank responds, "I didn't care for seeing them killed" (411). The thought leads into an ethic concerning the ecology of food. Where else but in time spent deeply immersed in the more than human world would Hank have gotten this kind of ecological thinking? His father Henry? Joe Ben, caught up in the rhetoric of Christian evangelism? And when he's more than willing to shoot a deer on the road out of season, gut it, clean it and bring it home for the dinner table, why the irrational resistance to shooting geese? But Hank isn't alone in his seduction by the more than human world. Viv in her early days in Oregon was similarly seduced.

In stark contrast, the natural environment in the novel much more often symbolizes anthropomorphized dominating forces that help leverage capitalist underwritten logic calling for the domination of nature: especially the river, the rain and the overwhelming vegetation. As a work of regionalist fiction, it may be useful to address elements of the natural environment via a methodology taken from environmental history. Donald Worster regards regionalism in Felix Frankfurter's terms, recognizing human diversity "shaped by nature" as well as "derived from the different reactions of men to nature" ("New West," 147). Kesey seems largely to have removed himself from diversity to address an either/or thesis of hero or coward, life or death, fighting to survive at the requisite standard of living, running away, or succumbing to suicide.



This black and white tendency in the work highlights the ways domination enforces conformity: there's a right way of being, and a wrong way of being. Noble and ignoble. Win or lose. Heroic or cowardly—and villainous. Nature becomes what it always becomes in traditional historical and fictional tellings of the American West: the backdrop against which (masculine) identity is forged. A terrible sublime calling forth a heroic, epic fighter and conqueror, concealing real historical diversity of the kind Worster sees in histories of the American West.

The river is considered a “highway of water” (Kesey, 4), economic transport for labor to the forest, logs downriver, lumber to the West Coast and beyond; the raw capital of trees seen in board feet and dollar signs. The river receives numerous projections of domination, devouring homes, motorboats, coffins, animals and dreams. The river dominates, and heroic man must fight, while the heroic ideal has been co-opted from religious underpinnings by the capitalist calling. Success is no longer proof of godliness, but proof of purchase in the American dream, of keeping up with the Joneses or in Henry's case with the Stokes. Survival is doing well in the capitalist regime and holding your ground. The Stamper home is a bulwark against the devouring river that takes Hank's bobcat kittens. Hank regards the river the way Evenwrite regards the union: “All it wants is its fair advantage” (108). Biggie alleges Hank ‘took advantage’ to win the previous summer's motorcycle race; Evenwrite is convinced Hank ‘took advantage’ in besting him on the all-state football team; the town sees Hank and the Stampers ‘taking advantage’ of the walkout to profit at their expense. The dominant always takes advantage, but the river is a victim of projected domination, anthropomorphized in retaliation for its ecological identity. Concealed in its sublime anthropomorphized identity, real capitalist intent.

Hank sees “a hundred reasons showing why I got to fight that river” (110). An ecological perspective would exhibit no notion of domination and challenge, only recognize the

characteristics of the ecological being in its ecosystem and adapt accordingly. But the river has taken the thing Hank was most attached to in childhood—as well as the symbol that would most secure his identity as the dominant male in the schoolyard. It threatens to take the house each and every flood. The disgust Hank uses to portray the river conceals ironically a disgust of ecologically ignorant human being in the world, of the real dominant foe in the deck of cards. Hank's grief bifurcates his personality, and true to the 'never say die' attitude of the traditional archetype, his interpellated half, "well known as one of the Ten Toughest Hombres this side of the Rockies," will fight the river for life, a river that "backs up from Wakonda with all the town's garbage and sewage and dead crud floating around in it stinking up a breeze" (110). Needless to say, it spits up garbage because humans put it in the river in the first place.

Rain runs Jonas Stamper off and back to Kansas, and turns Henry and Hank into faithful and disciplined attendees to the foundations of the house. In the bobcat vignette "that crazy business of his father's" becomes Hank's obsession. Even as a teenager, making out "in some Saturday-night battle of the bra" (109), the rain triggers the overwhelming need to get back home and shore up the foundations. The rain drives him home, drives him out alone into the wet night over and over; conditions him through loss and fear to hold onto home, the emblem of shelter from the rain, from wet and cold. The early November downpour initiating the rainy season and causing despair for the loggers "brought a jingle of joy from Teddy's till" (346). Evenwrite uses the gully-washer to ramp up his motivating rhetoric against the Stampers: "As far as us woods boys is concerned—an' the rest of you who make a livin' off the woods payroll—this rain coming might as well be an atom bomb...just as tough to survive" (351). He's well aware of the rhetorical flare. The rain and its environmental impact on the prospects of logging fire his rhetoric perfectly: "you boys know as good as I do, if you stop to think about it, what this hard

rain comin' down on bone-dry ground will do! What it will do to haulin', to the whole of woodsworlin', if we don't get on the ball" (352). His inflated rhetoric demotes Draeger's outsiderist superiority with a localist slap on the face:

A goddam knife tearing out ever' goddam road on this side of the valley!...if we ain't back up on those slopes this very goddam week!...you can just mark her down that we'll be spending every Monday mornin' for the rest of this fuckin' winter driving to Eugene to pick up unemployment checks! (352).

In the rain, no less. The rain not only threatens to halt work, it threatens to kill the logging identity, to put people on the dole. Kesey's reification of the independent businessman and disparagement of the strike is reinforced by this leveraging of rhetoric, this assertion of domination; and the rain gets, shall we say, left out in the cold. Never mind the fact that the rain is the reason why the forests are so large, the trees so big, the economic resource so covetous. Unemployment compensation works much as it does in the real capitalist world, as a means for shaming people back to work, rather than being perceived as a community support mechanism. Subsistence choices don't even register. Even while numerous references to the rain affect notions of the sublime in the novel, its true rhetorical force on the people of Wakonda seems to lie in its potential to threaten material dreams, empowerment and identity.

Throughout the novel, perhaps the lushest environmentalism lies in the flora. Erupting and entangled like a painting by Henri Rousseau, the tangled undergrowth holds great beauty, even as it threatens to devour and overgrow every effort man makes to cut his swath out of the countryside. Jonas thinks only in terms of how it threatens his expansive sense of himself, coined in terms of profit. Town becomes a prison, the vegetation constantly encroaching the way it does on Adam and Eve in Milton's *Paradise Lost*; necessitating "everlasting" labor "day in day out just to hang onto a floor of mud and a ceiling of clouds so low sometimes he felt he must stoop" (22). The vegetation threatens every day, like the river, to erase his mark.

Leland, the most nature-deficit of Stampers, is told by his mother to stay between the forest and the river, a place he too characterizes as a prison. He returns home and is captivated by the xeriscape around the house. Out in the forest his first day as a logger, he watches Hank “crashing off through the vine and brush” (181). The workplace of the forest is a place of natural pain and irritation. Working amongst the yellow and red flowers of firecracker weed, Leland gets so caught up competing to send more logs to the loader on the high line that he takes off his shirt and sweatshirt to haul

the unwieldy cable through a miasma of berry vine and fire slashing, but within half an hour both arms were quilted from glove top to shoulder with a pattern of welts and scratches...his stomach made him think fabric instead of flesh, a bright garment of patchwork skin stitched together with thorns (185).

When they break for lunch, Hank comes by and tells Lee about what it’s like to top the spar tree, setting it up to hold the high line from the donkey. In a story suggestive of John Muir’s “A Wind Storm in the Forests” from *The Mountains of California*, Hank talks of having to

Watch out those stobs we call gut-gougers. Watch out you get a good bite with your spurs or you slip and slide twenty feet and peel hide off your chest and belly and thighs like scrapin’ a carrot...You’re scared as hell. They say that the first spar is the tallest, but that’s all hokum; every one you climb is the tallest. And Christ, the sonofabitch is a good forty thousand board feet (189).

And then Hank describes swinging in the breeze in the tree-top, cutting off the last thirty feet.

Nature is viewed as dangerous. Leland falls into Henry’s “devil’s stovepipe” as a child. As an adult Hank warns him of the ocean tide’s power to roll a car over on him. Henry is in a half body cast for the duration of the novel due to a logging accident, and loses his arm when a tree slips, killing Joe Ben in another logging accident. Judy Stamper, Aaron’s grandkid, is “hammered flat by a spruce limb...dead as a doornail” (299). Logging accidents conceal the stunts and risks taken to win, to succeed, to get logs to the river and the mill. Other threats suggest a pattern of belief that some environmental historians have explored more fully, dating

back to the earliest pioneer days in America, a pattern of belief that portrayed the natural environment as dangerous, threatening—and in dire need of subjugation.<sup>27</sup>

When Hank and Joe Ben—the only willing, able bodied men left to work the field—head to the state park to fulfill the last of their quota for the WP contract, the sublime of the forest and the sublime of the traditional western American male archetype converge—and fall. The scene is fittingly nostalgic. Park stipulations require they cut and drag or slide the trees to the river without use of roads, trucks or donkey engines. Henry gives the boys a taste of his expertise in the largely obsolete art of “handlogging.” The wind and rain make it dangerous but acute awareness and skill will be on their side. Hank notes the shift in Henry’s demeanor as they talk in front of “huge looming trunks never seen anywhere any more except in government parks” (479). Leland says; “Hank’s attitude toward Henry had become very attentive, almost respectful” (479). Henry’s usual braggadocio and Hank’s belittling hyperbole are replaced by older and more respectful attitudes. Joe Ben observes; “the rain swirls about the trees, the sound of gullies being dug into the mountainside is like the sound of a busy highway roaring past somewhere nearby” (480). When exactly did metaphors for sounds in the woods lose their close relation to other sounds in the more than human world, gullies sounding like wild rivers, the mighty boom of winds in the trees like avalanches?

As Joe Ben and Hank get to work, Henry and Lee head to town, then Henry has an epiphany regarding the full moon and change of tides, and races back out to the state park. With the rain, there’s added danger of flood, of losing control of the logs once in the river on the way to the mill, but Henry sees the threat as a challenge, and rises accordingly. As Henry excitedly changes their plans for logging the tract, Hank watches in growing awe. Having shed the bullshitting joke-of-a-man he’s been of late, Hank sees “the boomer I used to follow on cruising

walks twenty years before, the calm, stubborn confident rock of a man” (489), the man that taught him everything he knew in order to run the show. Hank says as he listened to Henry, “I felt myself commence to relax. Like I’d had a couple quarts of beer” (490). He describes feeling “a kind of repose,” the first time he’d felt relaxed “in what seemed years and years” (490). His relaxation comes from the return of the old dominant Henry: “let him hold the handles a spell while I take a breather” (490). Hank relaxes out of the role of the dominant. “I hushed and let him think, wondering how long it had been since I’d been able to do that” (490). Henry’s experience, his take-charge demeanor, seduces Hank, and Hank lets go. Joe Ben wants to know what’s up, and Henry tells the reader “he knows he’ll get told when I’m ready to tell him” (491).

Henry’s one track desire is to beat “Evenwrite and Draeger an’ that bunch of goddam featherbeddin’ so-slists” (490). Winning, “whuppin’ ‘er,” the interpellation of capitalist achievement brought out by the town’s domination. Hank looks up at an old fir: “She’s a good one. Like they used to be” (491). He’s “content to let the old guy call the shots and run the show. Damned content” (492). When Henry exhausts himself, he says looking into the ancient fir stand; “So...What do you say?” (492). Joe Ben jumps in excitedly, but Henry exercises dominance. “I was askin’ you, Hank” (492). Hank is overwhelmed with the archetypal ideal Henry puts forth. “It wasn’t like I was standing there talking with the wild and wooly town character anymore, but with some fierce young jack who had just walked up out of the years ready to spit on his palms and take over again” (491).

The subtle play of domination clouds Hank’s judgment, as Henry’s determination is insinuated linguistically: “[C]an we cut our quota today?...Just us three?...I’m askin’ you boy” (492-493). The “boy” is the telltale sign. Hank tells the reader; “What could I tell him? If he says we can whip it” (493). Meanwhile, “The forest fought against the attack on its age-old domain

with all the age-old weapons nature could muster” (496-497). Hank’s decision leads them all through one brief halcyon moment into a twist of fate that tragically kills Joe Ben and rips the arm off of Henry, leaving him for dead in the hospital. The Foucaultian panopticon instilled in Hank can’t say no, can’t take that final step to relieve his father finally of dominant status, in part because Hank will always be Henry’s son, in part because Hank is weary from the burden of inhabiting the traditional western American archetype. If Hank had chosen more safely, chosen to fail rather than to risk life and limb...yet how could he have possibly known? Hank is possessed by “That brassy beat of high-school idealism and determination... beating out we got, we got to...until the words became we will, we will, we will!...and when I put my hand on the log and vault over it I feel like if I don’t hold back I’ll just sail right off in the sky” (494).

Val Plumwood has argued that human identity in the Euro-American west has been defined “in opposition to and through the denial of nature” (22). We can see this caricature most purely in Henry, in the way that Henry characterizes and embodies the traditional western American male archetype. Plumwood talks especially of the backgrounding of the mother in masculine identity, “especially her nurturance, expelling it from his own makeup and substituting domination and the reduction of others to instrumental status” (22). Henry was socialized first by the domineering and puritanical father Jonas—and the social relations, religious beliefs and treatment of women in which he was situated—and later by the instrumentalizing subtext of Jeremy Stokes’ capitalist machinations, via his competitive son Boney Stokes. Add to this the isolated, localized public opinion over which the Stokes’ machinations masterfully gained control. Control of the economy in one way or another controls public opinion in the novel. Domination and instrumentalizing are rational reactions, while nurturance in the novel is construed in relational terms, and requires intimate and experiential understanding of the Other.

Henry's son Hank may never overcome his dominating tendencies, just as he can never escape their interpellation by the society he lives in, caught in the dualistic polarities of craving a strong identity and economic craving in a capitalist oriented society. But domination is a learned behavior in the novel overwhelmingly modeled linguistically as well as physically throughout male society to the virtual exclusion of all else. Domination is highlighted as the epitome of the oppressive social megamachine, while nurturance arises as an outcome of subjecthood in partnership-based relation to the Other, whether Hank's wife Viv, his brother Lee or the more than human world. Grief—an ego-stricken, leveling experience that empowers relationally even as it disempowers faith in human control over all—opens up a narrowly defined, traditional, masculine, instrumentalizing world to a world of appreciation, partnership and mutual indwelling offering perhaps the only exit, in Gorz' terms, from consumerist driven high capitalism to a brave new world, where sufficiency takes root in quality relationships and subjecthood.

A thorough examination of domination in the novel cannot be complete without examination of the frequent use of the word “nigger” and other pejorative references to blacks. Aside from two very minor, very remote characters in the novel, there are no blacks. Still, social and environmental justice are both at stake. The N word connotes historic racial oppression first and foremost in the service of capitalist oriented pursuits. Kesey places the term most often and in its most variable of expressions in the mouth of Henry Stamper, embodying the traditional western American male archetype in its purest form. Obvious racist expressions of the term in the novel include ‘nigger work,’ though Jabari Asim in *The N Word: Who Can Say It, Who Shouldn't, and Why* argues that the word serves primarily—even in its contemporary “friendlier” usage—as a linguistic extension of white supremacy (4). Hank's prejudices largely allow him to mediate a committed and all too close relationship with his father. Lee characterizes his East



Coast roommate as an “Uncle Remus” (Kesey, 65), while eschewing the Ku Klux Klan and the John Birchers (622). Leland’s prejudices evoke his dad’s domination on the one hand, his need for a place in the hierarchy of domination, and his need to frame people in instrumental ways that allow for prediction and expectation, however inaccurate. Wakonda’s prejudices against the only black—a black girl who once lived in town—are perhaps the most loaded next to Henry’s, though Henry’s prejudices are never addressed to or about a black character per se in the novel.

Asim traces use of the N word back to an original expression perhaps neutral in its intent, though as early as the late 1500’s early spellings of the word showed pejorative tendencies, and Scottish poet Robert Burns’ 1786 poem “The Ordination” clearly held pejorative intent (10). Strikingly, Thomas Jefferson’s “Notes on the State of Virginia, 1785” proposed forthrightly that blacks were inferior to whites “in endowments of both body and mind” (Asim, 20). The book jacket of Asim’s hardcover edition characterizes Jefferson’s stereotype as “a shiftless child-man with huge appetites and stunted self control,” a description that seems to epitomize ironically a projected, self interested, dominant capitalist male stereotype. The description could characterize Henry to a large extent as well as the roots of the capitalist system in which he’s hopelessly embedded.

Slavery in the United States as in colonized regions around the globe provided a system of forced labor. In Lerone Bennett’s terms, slavery “provided the initial thrust to the American economy” (146). In *The Shaping of Black America*, Bennett characterizes a government institutionalized police state, a system fraught with “organic violence,” a revisionist history underwritten by slave annalists who have asserted that “whippings were common on all plantations, with few slaves escaping at least one beating in their lifetime” (147-148). Solomon Northup described whippings accompanied by cries that could “be heard from dark till bedtime”

throughout the cotton picking season (Bennett, 148). Bennett emphatically characterizes slavery as a form of brainwashing hinging on fear and hate. He describes fascist regimentation on many plantations and refers in totalitarian terms to what one historian has called “a social system as coercive as any yet known” (Bennett, 149-150). Of especial interest in the study of forms of historic capitalist labor used to extract natural resources, plantation slavery was built upon a complex, imposed hierarchy that descended from the house slaves and artisans to the lowest of field hands.<sup>28</sup> Bennett says some authorities have referred to house slaves and artisans as a “slave aristocracy,” but in strong addition to the common belief that these constituted language and behaviors more like the master than the field slave, he asserts that many blacks in this imposed hierarchy utilized their position to help those distant from the big house, with food and other provisions as well as regular, non-hierarchical dialogue (159).

John Blessingame in *The Slave Community* says “the behavior of the black slave was intimately bound up with the nature of the antebellum plantation, the behavior of masters” (154). Referring to domestic servants as “part of the plantation elite” (Blessingame, 163), he argues that though they had in many ways better privileges and living conditions, life in such close proximity to the plantation family was often one of high stress and frequent physical—and I would add undoubtedly verbal—abuse. The slave driver, who Bennett refers to as the leading black authority figure, supervised slaves and policed their quarters. Bennett on the one hand notes that the slave driver was “required to maintain proper discipline at all times,” and was prone to corruption (160). On the other hand, Bennett and other historians address the opposite tendency, for black slaves in positions of power to use these to the benefit of other slaves, to mediate between the demands and expectations of the master and the needs of the other slaves.<sup>29</sup>

In Kesey's *Sometimes*, Lee is regularly positioning himself between Hank—who in his

mind has always been the most dominating figure in his life—and Joe Ben, whom he sees as a buffoon. This is the logic of domination playing out in Lee’s mind with Foucaultian panopticism, but the town bar’s expression of hierarchy plays in similar terms as well. Darryl Pinckney characterizes Joel Chandler Harris’s 1877 creation of Uncle Remus—the nickname Leland gives to his East Coast roommate—as a revision of Uncle Tom, expressing white supremacist rhetoric along with frequent use of the N word (Asim, 100). A common cliché of supremacist defined race relations is to know and be kept in one’s place. By extension, any hierarchically defined system of domination works on the same repressive mechanism, a mechanism that orders and discriminates as it instrumentalizes. My intention here is not to place black racism on par with other forms of domination relied upon to carry out the capitalist enterprise. Rather, I hope to show that beneath racial oppression as well as other forms of coercing and disciplining human labor lies common patterns of hierarchy and domination, however different their effect and reach, that have yet to be fully addressed.

Asim traces the popular reappropriation of the N word to Zora Neal Hurston and her compatriots in the 1930’s Harlem Renaissance (139). With Henry’s use of the word in *Sometimes*, we might refract the expression through Gunnar Myrdal’s description in *An American Dilemma* (1940): “The Negro is believed to be stupid, immoral, diseased, lazy, incompetent and dangerous” (Asim, 150). Beneath each of these terms lie the hierarchy of domination, of self over other, and the fear that these pejorative terms can just as easily be turned on one’s self. The greater the denouncement, the stronger the unexpressed fear. Certainly the Emmett Till Tragedy that swept the nation in a firestorm of controversy—the same year Rosa Parks made national headlines for her arrest in Montgomery, Alabama, 1955—could not have been too distant from Kesey’s consciousness. At the time, Kesey was twenty and attending

college at the University of Oregon. As deeply immersed in critical social issues as his earlier novel *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* shows, Kesey's southern gothic use of the N word seems overwhelmingly likely to have carried similar satiric tones.

Asim quotes longstanding West Virginia Senator and one time Ku Klux Klan member Robert Byrd from 2001: "There are white niggers. I've seen a lot of white niggers in my time" (169). The NAACP and others in a late 1990's plea to change the Merriam-Webster definition wrote: "We believe the word 'nigger' should not be defined as synonymous with a black, Negro or member of a socially disadvantaged class of person" (Asim, 170). The National Black Family Empowerment Network in 2000 called for all black leaders to "renounce and denounce" the term, saying "no matter who uses it" the term is "the most harmful and enduring symbol of slavery and Black oppression" (Asim, 170). Asim argues that successful use of the N word in artistic expression—such as by Richard Pryor or Dave Chappelle—depends on acknowledging the word's origin in white supremacy (172). I offer no new meaning to the word here, only the recognition that supremacy is a necessary mechanism of domination in whatever relation it takes. If anything, reading *Sometimes*' indulgent use of the N word on practically every white man in the novel, as well as an animal or two, should highlight in chiaroscuro the "blood and filth," to use Asim's terms, that has been the word's onerous history. Henry's use of the term on his own race and kin points the reader to its partial origins in the need for disciplined and controlled labor and the necessity of power over others that capitalist serving domination has historically required.<sup>30</sup>

Henry's prejudices in *Sometimes*, however easily ascribed to mechanisms, logics and rhetorics of domination, are simultaneously rooted in the historical prejudices and racial oppression of the time. For Henry, this time and place lays between 1898 Kansas and 1961

Oregon. Black gay activist Calvin Gibson has drawn an analogy between the sanctioned use of ‘queer’ among gays and ‘nigger’ among blacks, recognizing the offense of white or straight people using those terms (Asim, 213-214). Asim is less certain. Gibson sees exclusivity as a necessary form of empowerment, while Asim argues the N word still evokes anger, hatred and pain, contrasting socially accepted “queer studies” to highly unlikely “nigger studies” (214).<sup>31</sup>

The effects of domination on the dominator culture itself and our platform for existence, the more than human world, certainly cannot compare with race and gender-based oppression—at least on humanist terms. But there is a recognizable form of victimhood in the white man’s oppression of himself in constructing the oppressor. The destruction of the earth as we have known it is nothing less than evidence of our own agency in that destruction, carried out to every seducible, dependent or coerced people on the face of the earth. Perhaps the most significant point the reader can take away from Asim’s work is that however deconstructed and re-informed the term may come to be, the N word will remain hurtful to a significant number of people, cause outrage on the one hand while remaining embraced for its historic supremacist overtones by another. Such wounds may be impossible to heal, impossible to forget. Critical thinking teaches we can never get rid of anything, only continually unearth what has been hidden or forgotten; continually re-contextualize until history accurately portrays a plurality of experience and power relations have shifted to at least identify the hands and coercion of the dominant, if not expedite the change of power. Hank evolves Henry’s blatant racist viewpoint in a way not dissimilar with the way succeeding generations of Americans have attempted to evolve racism, sexism and other forms of oppression and inequality: stuck in the past and straining for the future. Similarly, Kesey constructs a feminist allegory, however weak its terms. Like Edna Pontellier in Kate Chopin’s *The Awakening*, Myra, Leland’s mother, commits suicide; while Vivian, Hank’s wife,

leaves the Stampers to themselves in search of herself, her authentic subjecthood.

Leland makes one last effort to take Vivian away, one last effort to dominate Hank, to draw him out of numbness in front of televised football games on Thanksgiving Day. Beaten by losses of close family, the Wakonda Pacific contract, Lee's mockery over the town's superficial sympathy and generosity, Hank is drawn into one final fistfight with Lee. Lee's taunting sounds much like Stewie's on Seth McFarlane's animated television series *The Family Guy*: snide, irascible, cutting, glancing over the shoulder with an incorrigible smile (*Family*, n.p.). The reader may tend to see Hank's violence as a reversion to brute masculinity, but I argue that Hank expresses grief the way many men trapped in the traditional western American male archetype have often characterized their options: denial or rage. In the end, what choice does he have for expressing his grief, given the way he's been conditioned? At the same time Lee refuses to stay down, and a funny thing happens. Hank exhausts the moment of his grief, and Lee, rather than dying, earns a badly needed sense of self as equal with Hank. The novel ends with the brothers taking the logs downriver after all.

We may not be able to escape interpellation by a society rooted in domination-based desire, fear and judgment. But authentic subjecthood, like André Gorz' 'sufficiency living'—far from mere resistance or rejection of the dominant paradigm—is one vital means of evolving towards more sustainable material and spiritual living. If we learn anything from Hank we learn that the true marrow of living lies not in achievement or conformity with the dominant expectations, but in broad-based ecological awareness and co-habitation, in a more sensitive partnership with each other and the more than human world. Hank won't submit, and Lee has always taken the submissive stance. Bourdieu's reflections on bodily emotions and submission—or resistance in a world where domination wins either way—suggest the deep complex of feeling

so difficult to communicate, whether to readers or each other. Lee may be a far better candidate for perceiving what Bourdieu describes as “the insidious complicity that a body slipping from the control of consciousness and will maintains with the censures inherent in the social structures” (39), but Hank has his own share of moments where he’s well aware of how he’s behaving, how he’s been programmed to behave, and yet he’s powerless to stop it. Teddy sums it up most succinctly in the novel, disposing of God as a “make-do doll to wave in the face of the true All-Powerful...the Force that created them,” Fear (Kesey, 393). Bourdieu alludes to the durable mechanized character of the imprint of domination when discussing the structured logic of feeling and compulsory duty.<sup>32</sup> The very moment Henry seems to have taken back the reigns of the dominant, Hank is thinking “just turn me on and aim me. That’s how I’d like it, anyhow” (Kesey, 493). Imprisonment in the dominant representation—at one level of loyal functionary or another—offers respite from the uncertainties of self responsibility and self determination, as well as shelter from the firestorm of coercion hurled intensely and relentlessly by the social megamachine.

In her essay “The Land and Language of Desire,” SueEllen Campbell writes on the common ground and differences of post-structuralism and deep ecology. A common root of the two disciplines criticizes “the dominant structures of Western culture and the vast abuses they have spawned” (Campbell, 127). In terms of sexism, racism and the domination of nature to the extent that we are killing off biodiversity and diminishing the livability of the Earth for so many other species, perhaps nothing compares to the masculine ideal used to dominate humankind as well as manufacture socially ascribed dominators. No masculine ideal has been so cinematic, so thoroughly marketed perhaps as the traditional western American male stereotype; none more rhetorically pervasive, none more globally reproduced. Like a row of silver pendulum balls,

domination reverberates throughout the entire biosphere of the novel—psychologically, sociologically, ecologically—as well as our own inhabited world. Simultaneity of experience in the novel, simultaneity of past and present, of this and that thought and action, to use Barry H. Leeds’ term, suggests ecological awareness, if always incomplete in its fashioning, always in the middle, never an absolute beginning or end. Kesey’s Coltrane-esque wall of words epitomizes the mirroring of environmentality in form that Timothy Morton calls for in *Ecology Without Nature*.

Fittingly Kesey located Wakonda Pacific in San Francisco, a locale William G. Robbins and other historians have identified as a significant, early, enduring center of investment capital for Pacific slope plunder (Robbins, 3). Between 1941 and 1957 lumber import was greater than export for the U.S. in all but one year (Ficken, *Forested*, 225). The lumber industry experienced repeated recessions in the following decades due to competitive global markets, and the value of pulp exceeded the value of timber in Washington State by 1960 (Ficken, *Forested*, p. 225). As historic private timber holdings gave way in the postwar era to forced dependency on Forest Service timber in the Pacific Northwest, political leveraging of relaxed multiple use policies on Forest Service land became imperative (Ficken, *Forested*, 227). Donald Worster, in composing applicable historical theory for the American West based on capitalist critique, argues that “in the new mode, power becomes faceless and impersonal, so much so in fact that many are unaware it exists” (*Rivers*, 52). Instrumental reason “is the ideological force driving the capitalist state on and on,” leading historically to a “totalitarian attack of the human race on anything that it excludes from itself,” whether people, ecosystems or others in the more than human world (Worster, *Rivers*, 55). Characterizing the critical theorists of the Frankfurt School, in whose work he finds much to consider, Worster argues that their common theme “was that domination, not



the freedom promised by progress boosters, is the lot of twentieth century humans” (*Rivers*, 53). William G. Robbins, a one-time Oregon logger who has written extensively on Oregon history, points to the “profound way that dominant cultures and their accompanying ideologies forge memory, shape perceptions and values, and otherwise become preoccupied with national virtue” in the capitalist enterprise (6).

In many ways we in the American west are still confronted and enslaved by aspects of the traditional western American male archetype and its uses for hegemonic, workplace, social and political domination. Some form or fashion of this dominant masculine archetype is still interpellated, reproduced and maintained, especially for labor, production and political ends, certainly even far beyond the American west. In terms of natural resources and the more than human world, domination and the archetype are leveraged to eliminate wilderness, turn all lands into some form of economic potential that benefits the few while taking advantage of the ninety-nine percent. Coal, oil and natural gas interests and political rhetoric deny the reality of global warming, while insisting on the heroic identities and jobs of miners and roughnecks, ignoring the real costs of boom and bust labor. As with the great old growth forests of the Pacific Northwest, once it’s gone, it’s gone, and the most tragic aspect of environmental degradation, biodiversity and habitat loss is that, at least on the human side of the equation, our desire and nostalgia for antiquated, romanticized identities and power make us all too vulnerable to manipulation and addiction at tremendous cost to our social relations and the more than human world.

In a review of Pierre Bourdieu’s *Masculine Domination*, Eric Anderson and Francesca M. Cancian argue that Bourdieu believes little change has occurred and will occur—though Bourdieu argues for resistance to the symbology of domination. While material equality and sexist concerns have formulated discourse and action, the brief moment in the 1970’s and early

1980's to change dominance-based relations into partnership-based ones seems to have evaporated into enclaves of trendier emotional intelligence, high-tech collaborative styles of conflict management and all out abandon embracing the dominant archetype for all genders, leaving out the difficult, meticulous, day to day work of becoming conscious of dominance-based interpersonal transactions and expressions, noticing them with compassion and lowered judgment, creating alternative partnership-based expressions, and making them habitual. This kind of work doesn't come easy. It requires conscious choice over identity and behavior even against desire, seduction, addiction, and deeply programmed reaction. But anyone who has experienced and practiced with the model of partnership-oriented relations that Riane Eisler has put forth knows its ability—with emotional intelligence and ecological intelligence especially—to transform the world. We have hard work to do as citizens of earth, and we cannot do without alliances to such notions as conscious and sustainable capitalism, socially and environmentally responsible capitalism. When we vote with our identities, material and relational, as Gary Snyder once said we make the change we need inevitable. Wisdom is a term that has been worn ragged; debunked at a time when it needed to be, then hung out and left to dry by postmodern academic criticism. Wisdom is a term and a practice we desperately need to reconstruct and reconnect with in order to make it through the long haul.

In working closely, deeply and critically in multidisciplinary fashion with Kesey's model of traditional and evolving western American masculine archetypes and domination, I have learned much more about the half of me programmed and socialized by my own father and traditional masculine social relations, programs and behaviors I eschewed in exploring hippie and then Buddhist consciousness, in an effort to escape tradition's intuited sins. Aspects of the traditional western American masculine archetype are valuable for evolution of the masculine as

well as feminine consciousness. Women in the West have often found it best rather than inhabit previous archetypes of feminine, to empower themselves with the socially constructed masculine, let judgment fall where it may. In a world of biocentric respect for each Other, demand for control and conformity gives way to authentic listening and ecological being in the world, pardon the remaining vestiges of a dominating identity and desire. To arrive at a productive and fruitful practice, we must continue to observe.

In Wallace Stegner's early short story "Bugle Song," about a boy trapping gophers out on the far northern prairies, living with a mother whose only power seems to be making him read poetry, we see many of the same hegemonic reinforcements of domination and the western American masculine archetype as in Kesey's *Sometimes*. Though his father is absent in the story, the boy's sense of what it means to be a man is already well formed. That it takes place in the prairies of Saskatchewan suggests affinities to the American west. The boy's gopher trapping is driven by capitalist interest hegemonically reinforced on a bureaucratic level. Gophers are a nuisance animal to farming and ranching, their tails fetch a price, schoolboys offered a contest and prize for the greatest number of tails, instrumental value constructed by farm and ranch lobbies and the state. The boy's pleasure in mechanistically killing gophers is paired with an aversion to death and the creepy, crawly things that perform the ecological services of rendering the dead, a sign of denied kinship.

Weasels form another instrumental possibility. When the boy talks to his captive weasel, awaiting the time its pelt becomes valuable as an ermine, Stegner notes "There was no dislike or emotion to his tone" (16). The boy's emotional connection with the things of nature, other than perhaps the distant and dreamy "Mountains of the Moon," has been socialized out of him by the material rewards and hegemonic framing of the animals as instruments of capitalism. His mother

is there, but as in Val Plumwood's assessment is both largely ignored and the foil against which masculine identity is formed: emotion versus 'correct' rationalization. Certainly the recognition of the gophers' impact on crops and the need for predatory weasels suggests ecological awareness, but the boy's rote dedication to extermination and profit—in the face of his mother's plea that he's being cruel—suggests the extent to which the master model has gripped and socialized him. Poetry is warped as a dominating assertion of the feminine and cast off when finally trapping his prey. Yet—ironically—in the moment when the boy lays supine, reading poetry in the hot sun and waiting quietly to trap his prey, Stegner asserts a rich synesthetic experience. The boy becomes lost in the moment of color and sensation and smell. Psalm becomes song and enchants him, deeply at one with the moment.

Feeding the live gopher to his weasel seems to emphasize the natural relation of predator to prey, mystifying the fact that few animals—other than humans—trap and cage predators and revel in watching them dominate and kill. Stegner places this squarely in the face of the reader, and unlike Aldo Leopold's awakening to the spirit that lived in the dying eyes of the wolf, the boy has no feminine emotion available to reach out and sympathize either with the victimized gopher or the caged weasel. The reader can only surmise that these tendencies have been socialized out of him, and hope in the future some act of fate or monumental relation will return the gifts of the feminine to his soul. Meanwhile, rational and emotional experience remain sharply divided and hierarchized in the story. The squealing sound of terror through behavioral conditioning triggers fervent anticipation. Stegner situates the moment of death as the weasel eats the gopher in binary opposition to the poetic: the boy is completely out of touch with his body. He follows up this graphic moment with complete abandon to the Sears, Roebuck catalog and its dreams.

My desire has been to discard the traditional, enslaving, manipulative notions of independence, self reliance and sheer strength and will for something much more organic. No man is an island, but the communities of thought and discipline under which we subordinate ourselves must be critiqued carefully and unflinchingly. We cannot afford to miss the effects—like the effect on Hank of the wailing bobcats in the berry thicket, or the degree beyond his own personal loss he feels *their* loss—of the more than human world on us humans. Following Heidegger’s thought, letting the other dwell in and reveal itself on its own terms, define itself on its own terms, in commonalities as well as difference, “requires human consciousness as the space, or ‘clearing’ ...in and through which it is disclosed” (Garrard, 31). By revaluing nature, with a conscious nod to ecocritic Glen Love, not only do we reveal a different, less annihilating set of instincts and character development for characters in literature, we reveal the truly humane that the humanities always reaches for. Following Scot Slovic, who has argued that nature writers are primarily “students of the human mind, literary psychologists” (351), owing in part to their occupation with awareness, I have tried to show from the nature writing perspective how fictive experience in the novel might be interpolated in real, if only comparative, terms. In employing Jane Goodall’s work, as well as recent ethological work on humans, my hope is that the insights of ethology—far less ubiquitous a science in the United States—will be recognized as a resource far from exhausted in exercising the ecocritical view. So too psychology and ecopsychology. The central argument of the humanities is that humans are distinguished in one form or another from our animal kin. Jane Goodall’s work puts humans to task: Are we more human, or animal? We may never fully escape our social programming. At the same time, nothing is so malleable in the human condition as human consciousness, the root of practically all non-essential behavior. Neal Evernden’s concepts of inter-relatedness and inter-mingling

suggest that the next evolutionary step in our survival—and the survival of much of the world as we know it—may lie in our willingness to sustain a healthy, nurturing, learning relationship to the more than human world.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The passage continues; “Our upbringing, socialization, education and integration teach us, subsequently, to be Others among Others, to deny that non-socializable part of ourselves that is the experience of being a subject, and channel our lives and desires into pre-ordained pathways, to merge with the roles and functions that the social megamachine demands we fulfill” (Gorz, 3-4).

<sup>2</sup> The passage begins; “It’s not ‘I’ who acts, but the automated logic of social systems that works through me as Other, that makes me participate in the production and reproduction of the social megamachine. That logic is the real subject” (Gorz, 4).

<sup>3</sup> Plumwood says; “if we do not understand the development and defects in the western story of reason and nature, we may remain trapped within it or settle for one of its newer versions” (Plumwood, 6).

<sup>4</sup> The Siuslaw natives may have been a model. The Siuslaw were assigned to the Coast reservation, established by executive order in 1855, along with other tribes. Against consent of Coast and Alsea reservation tribes, in 1875 the lands were opened for settlement. Those who did not migrate to the Siletz reservation were offered 160 acre homesteads, and many Siuslaw settled on the Siuslaw river near Florence Oregon where Kesey researched and set much of the novel. Lands claims began as early as 1916 with little result. Robert H. Ruby and John A. Brown claimed in *A Guide to the Indian Tribes of the Pacific Northwest* (1986) that no one was left alive who spoke the Siuslaw language (Jackson, n.p.).

<sup>5</sup> The scorn of a cricket is given much greater historic and rhetorical resonance when insects and insecticide use between World War I and the emergence of Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* (1962) are viewed with an eye towards dominating rhetorics. See Edmund Russell’s *War and Nature: Fighting Humans and Insects with Chemicals from World War I to Silent Spring* (2001). Though no bug films seem to inform the novel, Kesey was a big film fan, and William M. Tsutsui discusses popular unease over bugs in the 1950’s as shown by numerous popular science fiction films in his essay “Looking Straight at Them! Understanding the Big Bug Movies of the 1950’s” (Tsutsui, 237-253).

<sup>6</sup> Hank says; “Hell, what people think don’t even leave a blue spot...Besides, even if they do leave a blue spot or two...they don’t really mean any harm by it” (Kesey, 82-83).

<sup>7</sup> (Buell, 40).

<sup>8</sup> Historian Robert E. Ficken tells of a sulfite plant whose acidic waste in the late 1920’s and early 1930’s killed off the oyster population and industry in Washington’s Shelton Bay. Ficken’s conclusion to the ensuing battle—fought without strong causal scientific evidence—is telling: “Little was known about the effects of pollution at the time and responsible people could, with reason, conclude that the economic benefits of a pulp mill more than compensated for the dangers of pollution, which were largely theoretical at the time.” He continues “Shelton residents...welcomed the pollution,” quoting from the *Mason County Journal*: “For it signifies jobs for workers and jingling cash registers in business establishments” (*Lumber*, 147).

<sup>9</sup> The U.S. Census Bureau estimated Florence’s 2010 population at 8,466; Springfield at 59,403; Eugene at 156,185; Lane County at 351,715; Oregon at 3,831,074 and the U.S. at 308,745,538 (“Quick,” n.p.).

<sup>10</sup> Ecological overshoot refers to the relationship of consumption over resource availability and production. Early ecological footprint pioneers William E. Rees and Mathis Wackernagel in *Our Ecological Footprint: Reducing*

*Human Impact on the Earth* (1996), claimed “If everybody lived like today’s North Americans, it would take at least two additional planet Earths” (15). Wackernagel’s present project, The Global Footprint Network, continues this work. The site offers detailed national data sets in global hectares per person (GHP), and as of May 2009 presented the fact: “If everyone lived the lifestyle of the average American we would need five planets” (“Footprint,” n.p.) Notably, circa 1960 U.S. consumption was located at less than six GHP, while production was close to 8 GHP. Overshoot occurred in the late 1960’s and 2005 statistics showed U.S. consumption at just over 8 GHP while production had fallen to just over 4 GHP (“United...America,” n.p.).

<sup>11</sup> “The tides at the river’s mouth were flooding, and the river was flowing inland instead of toward the sea. The current usually flowed four hours toward the sea, then stood an hour, then turned and flowed two or three hours in the other direction. During this backward up-river flow, as the salt water from the sea rushed to embrace the mud-filled water from the mountains, the river would be at its highest” (Kesey, 106).

<sup>12</sup> (Nietzsche, 246).

<sup>13</sup> As a student of psychology with limited credentials and a great deal of observation in a variety of social dynamics and blue collar workplaces, I would note that stress—and our beliefs about it—though highly acculturated in a man’s world in the American west as well as the modern world of which we all belong, can be highly impacted by domination and enforcement of conformity, as well as personal responsibility, other social pressures and workload.

<sup>14</sup> A 1998 study published in the peer reviewed journal *Environment and Behavior* “reported that in sixty-four outdoor spaces at a Chicago housing development,” a complex comprising 5700 residents located in one of the ten poorest neighborhoods in the country, “almost twice as many children (ages three to twelve) played in areas that had trees and grass than played in barren spaces, and their play was more creative” (Louv, 179). A pair of studies conducted in Canada suggested “children who experience school grounds with diverse natural settings are more active, more aware of nutrition, more civil to one another and more creative” (Louv, 219).

<sup>15</sup> All are needed by each one/Nothing is fair or good alone./I thought the sparrow’s note from heaven,/ Singing at dawn on the alder bough;/I brought him home, in the nest at even;/He sings the song but it cheers not now,/for I did not bring home the river and the sky;—/He sang to my ear,—they sang to my eye (Emerson, 441).

<sup>16</sup> (Eisler, xvii).

<sup>17</sup> I note Lowry’s regard for Maslow’s work with women cautiously; I cannot say how feminism receives Maslow’s work today.

<sup>18</sup> (Kesey, 527).

<sup>19</sup> Native Americans in the novel’s central time frame—1961—are portrayed as disenfranchised and television addicted. A female character, Indian Jenny, is portrayed in deplorably sexist terms as a get rich quick schemer like her dad, a self empowered “Innocent Eréndira” of Gabriel Garcia Marquez fame.

<sup>20</sup> Depletion and surplus are characterized by shuttered mills “sprouting moss between curling shingles... Wiring all corroding, machinery decaying. People forever complaining about tough times and trouble, bad work and worse pay...cold winds blowing and colder winters coming” (Kesey, 44-45). In 1948, when Kesey was but twelve years old, The Eugene *Register-Guard* reported on a major change coming to the Willamette Valley’s timber businesses. As former governor Charles A. Sprague succinctly put it: “Western Oregon is in a transition period between the time when it had unlimited quantities of virgin timber and the period when it is going to be cut over or come to some solution providing sustained yield” (Worth, 1-2). The push for sustained yield, some small operators argued, favored big corporations with large tracts of land. Anti-patriotic rhetoric—as federal and state land managers negotiated for the first sustained yield logging region in Oregon—heated up with “charges of monopoly, communism and New Deal-ism” (Worth, 1-2). But a 1946 poll in Lane County showed that of 238 lumber mills in operation, the majority expected to be out of business in one to four years—the amount of time expected to exhaust nearby timber stands (Worth, 1-2).



<sup>21</sup> Robert F. Kennedy Jr. makes the same argument against West Virginia coal advocacy's jobs claim in the 2011 film *The Last Mountain* (Last, n.p.).

<sup>22</sup> On December 4, 1947, the *Register-Guard* reported that the local unemployment district had a 315 percent increase in claims over ones made in November 1946. With other minor causes, the paper blamed "the heavy rain in October which made some logging roads impassable and forced the closure of certain operations" ("Unemployment," 10). Corresponding with the ramp-up in post-war affluence and affordable homes, Lane County saw a record timber cut in 1946, over a billion board feet, which the reporter claimed "could clean out Lane County's taxable forest lands in a very few years" ("Timber," 1). The West Coast as a whole saw record or near record timber harvesting the following year "to fill the spiraling demands of the building and construction industries" (Associated, 4). The AP claimed the region "produces more than a third of the nation's lumber" (Associated, 4). In February of 1948, mills in Lane County shut down for several days, putting up to 2000 loggers out of work due to a massive interstate power outage spawned by demand, drought and mechanical failure ("Power," 1, "Most," 1). The paper's archives for 1947-1948 also document regular rail car shortages causing work stoppage. Clearly during Kesey's childhood a number of factors were contributing to seasonal unemployment and boom and bust cycles in a region with limited—if long denied—timber resources. Never mind the impact of resource depletion on the character of an ecosystem established for perhaps thousands of years.

<sup>23</sup> Hank says; "Do you realize...that we sent eight truckloads down to the river today. By God, eight. That's the biggest cutting since, Lord, since I don't even remember...and I feel pretty good, if anybody wants to know, pretty motherin' good!" (Kesey, 220).

<sup>24</sup> In a 2003 essay on the steam donkey and its use in high-lead logging in the Pacific Northwest, author Tom Hull titled his work "More Deadly than War," referring to a 1920 statement made by the Safety Board of Washington State in regards to the steam donkey. The high-lead logging featured in the novel is presumably the diesel driven version. But the donkey engine sped decimation of old growth forest in a way more detrimental than war as well. (Hull, 355-358).

<sup>25</sup> Hank's enjoyment of the milk cow is highly sensual: "He moved his ear to the animal's sleek bulk and could hear her guts working. He liked the sound. He liked the cow. He liked feeling her warmth and squeezing the rhythm of milk into the pail...a cow's tit was a nice change from an axe handle, and the soft working of a cow's gut was a relief after the old man's snortin' and fartin' and John's bullshitting and Orland's wife screeching...ain't they warm to lean against?" (Kesey, 83-84).

<sup>26</sup> Hank says; "It'd be like imagining getting tired of the rhododendron flowers in the dozen days they bloom every year, or like getting tired of that one magic day of silver thaw we have every dozen years that turns the dirty old world all the way from rusty tow-chains and the needles on the long-leaf pine to a bright, tinkling crystal" (Kesey, 409).

<sup>27</sup> Works such as Alan Taylor's essay "'Wasty Ways:' Stories of American Settlement," based in Otsego County where James Fenimore Cooper located his work *The Pioneers*, and Conevery Bolton Valencius' *The Health of the Country: How American Settlers Understood Themselves and Their Land* detail early Americans' beliefs from diaries, letters and other writings regarding their fears and the threats of the natural world.

<sup>28</sup> Environmental historian Mart A. Stewart has written a particularly detailed look at ways African-Americans resisted full submission and dependency on slave owners by cultivating unique subsistence relationships with the landscapes around antebellum South Carolina and Georgia tidewater rice plantations (54-56).

<sup>29</sup> Dorothy and Carl J. Schneider agree with Bennett's position as well. In addition, they refer to the more privileged positions as ones that conveyed "status" and "authority" (Schneider, 114). Jean Baker Miller, speaking in more general terms, has argued that in hierarchically stratified societies, "within each subordinate group, there are tendencies for some members to imitate the dominants" (114).

<sup>30</sup> Notably, Asim points to a study commissioned by CBS over Archie Bunker's frequent use of bigoted expressions in Norman Lear and Bud Yorkin's 1970's television series "All In the Family" (175). Though Lear and Yorkin's

apparent intent was to lampoon, the study suggested Bunker's expressions strengthened racial prejudices. In comedian Chris Rock's routine "Niggas vs. Black People," Asim says "Rock argued that 'niggas' are violent, lazy, ignorant, prone to theft, and suffer from a perverse lack of ambition" (209). Any and all of these characterizations apply to the regulars at the Snag bar who wear the word courtesy of Henry in the novel. They're all self interested, seeking to act out domination that's been acted out on them, and willing to take advantage of their fellow citizen. Rock's routine included "Niggas hate knowledge," and stubbornly entrenched prejudices in the United States—and highly manipulative political rhetoric, whether serving socially or environmentally unjust ends—equally have hated knowledge. Bigotry and domination feed on the denial of knowledge. Jean Baker Miller in her work further asserts that the subordinate knows far more than the dominant does, since the dominant's power hinges on control of knowledge (113).

<sup>31</sup> Dialectically Asim points to the strength the insult "that is so gay" (215) has in popular culture. I would quickly point out that ascribing disliked characteristics to the term "gay" is just another way to leverage domination. A honky straight boy has no power in a patriarchally constructed world if all he does is tell you he doesn't like something. Being gay may be a pleasure and a necessity to some, but it can hardly be said to come without—to say the least—some difficult and painful consequences. Shame, humiliation and subordination are perhaps the least of these.

<sup>32</sup> The "durable inclinations of the socialized body are expressed and experienced in the logic of feeling...or duty, which...may live on long after the disappearance of their social conditions of production" (Bourdieu, 39).

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